

To Alfred Taylor
with the Author's
Kind regards

AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES

OF THE DEATH

OF

KING CHARLES THE SECOND,

OF

ENGLAND.

BY NORMAN CHEVERS, M. D.

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BENGAL MEDICAL SERVICE.

THE cause of the death of King Charles the Second is an historical problem which,—despite the singular copiousness of the details of its attendant circumstances, recorded upon the generally unquestionable authority of medical and other eye-witnesses,—has remained unelucidated up to the present moment. I have long considered that the history of this memorable illness has in it nothing unintelligible to medical men of the present day, although the numerous Court Physicians and Surgeons, who watched its progress and reported its issue, wholly failed to raise the shroud of uncertainty and suspicion which has covered it until now.

The fact that certain characteristics of disease, as observed in India, throw a strong light upon the true nature of King Charles's fatal illness has, mainly, prompted me to attempt this long-needed explanation,—upon which, I venture to believe, a few scarce hours of leisure may be not unprofitably spent,—especially as the case is one of singular medico-legal interest.

The majority of recent historical authorities have decided, with Dr. Welwood, the author of the *Memoirs of England*, and many other physicians of the time, that the disease of which King Charles the Second died was Apoplexy. Several contemporary writers either suspected or plainly asserted that the King fell a victim to Poison. Every practical medical man, who reads the narrative of the case, must, I feel assured, decide that

it was not one of Apoplexy. The historical data upon which the suspicion of Poisoning rests are singularly strong, the medical foundation for this suspicion is *nil*;—it is, therefore, right that these two lines of evidence should be fairly weighed against each other, as I believe that they have never yet been; and,—when it is considered that the charge of poisoning, resting as it does upon the strong insinuations and broad assertions of several contemporary authorities with Bishops Burnet and Patrick at their head, has always clung to the Roman Catholic party,—it is, perhaps, best that the duty of dispelling this mischievous error should be undertaken by a Protestant.

Lord Macaulay remarks that “It should seem that no transactions in history ought to be more accurately known to us than those which took place round the death-bed of Charles the Second. We have several relations written by persons who were actually in his room. We have several relations written by persons who, though not themselves eye-witnesses, had the best opportunities of obtaining information from eye-witnesses. Yet whoever attempts to digest this vast mass of materials into a consistent narrative, will find the task a difficult one. Indeed, James and his wife, when they told the story to the nuns of Chaillot, could not agree as to some circumstances. The Queen said that, after Charles had received the last sacraments, the Protestant Bishops renewed their exhortations, the King said that nothing of the kind took place. ‘Surely,’ said the Queen, ‘you told me so yourself.’ ‘It is impossible that I could have told you so,’ said the King, ‘for nothing of the sort happened.’”

Since Lord Macaulay wrote, much important information has been collected in illustration of this event, which appears to have created such extraordinary attention in the minds of the by-standers and of the public, as to have led every one, who knew aught about it, to record the facts which he had noticed or had credibly heard and the doubts which he entertained, with all the minutely circumstantial detail of a judicial *procès verbal*. Consequently, the medical facts of the case, as they now lie before me, are tolerably complete; and any London Physician who chooses to undertake the not uninteresting and, both in an historical and medical point of view, highly important task, may, without much trouble or loss of time, render them so perfect, as to leave the cause of King Charles’s death absolutely clear to every reader.

King Charles died in the 54th year of his age. A retrospective glance at the eventful lives of his immediate ancestors will convince the reader, whose attention has been turned even a little to biographical study, that he came of healthy but not extremely vigorous stocks. Violent premature death was the rule—not the exception—in his family. His father, his mother, possibly his sister Henrietta, his maternal grandfather, his paternal great grandmother and great grandfather, died out of the course of nature.

His paternal great great grandfather, James the Vth of Scotland, an active and enterprising monarch, died early, apparently from little more than nervous depression. Mary of Guise, Anne of Denmark, and Marie de Medicis, were not long lived; his uncle Henry Prince of Wales and his sister Elizabeth died early, of Fever. James the First was, from his birth, a man of weak nervous system: both he and Henry the IVth of France were, constitutionally, timid; the one shuddering at the sight of a naked sword, the other shrinking at the report of cannon. In James, this defect was cowardice, inborn and thorough; in Henry, it was early mastered by a resolute will. Both were habituated to excess in strong drinks, and their morals were, in the last degree, depraved and abandoned. Queen Henrietta Maria and King Charles the First were both delicate and somewhat deformed persons, but enjoyed a remarkable immunity from disease. Charles was of small stature and inherited from his father a weakness of the lower extremities which prevented him from walking until he was seven years old, but which (although there was some permanent distortion) did not impair his activity in after-life. He was also singularly tardy in learning to speak, and never articulated very distinctly. We find no evidence of his having ever suffered from any severe illness. His personal habits were all good, he was strictly temperate, and, when his body was examined after his violent death, at the age of forty-seven, all his internal organs were found so perfectly healthy, that it was considered that he had enjoyed every prospect of attaining extreme old age.

His consort was a beautiful and healthy woman, but she was "very little" and appears to have been very crooked—"awry." The natural soundness of her constitution enabled her to endure many hardships and, in middle life, some privation. She died, in her 60th year, from the effects of an over-dose of opium.

Charles the Second appears to have borne little or no resemblance to either of his parents. In a large collection of good engravings from the portraits of the father, the mother, and the son, and of all the grand parents, which I possess, and from the comparison of many original paintings, I cannot trace the slightest family likeness* except that both he and his mother had full dark eyes, and that, while the mother's complexion was a fine brown ("a little touched," when she was young, "with the green sickness"), the son's was swarthy or muddy, or, as he, himself, called it "foggy."† Charles the First inherited the auburn hair of the Scottish Stuarts, his queen had brown or chesnut hair. Her father's hair was "reddish"—her mother's was "fair" and singular in its beauty and abundance. Both Charles the First and Henrietta Maria, with admirable faces, had figures below mediocrity. With their son, it was precisely the reverse. Charles the Second was, in the popular language of the day, a "tall black man," (his height was about five feet ten inches,) beautifully proportioned; although, as he became old, his figure grew thin and angular; graceful in a supreme degree, with small and delicately formed hands and feet; spare, muscular, lithe, active and full of nerve; but his face, although capable of great expression, being redeemed by the large black eyes, had ill-formed and heavy features, and, when at rest, wore a sour and saturnine aspect, which hardened and became intensified with advancing age.—As we are told by Juan Huartes, in his *Trial of Wits*,—"Men very hot and dry are rarely very handsome, * * because heat and dryness (as Aristotle saith of the Ethiopians) wryth the proportions of the face, "and so they become disfigured."

One who knew him well, having been brought up in his court, John Sheffield, earl of Mulgrave and Duke of Buckingham, has left a vivid but, perhaps, flattering picture of his only

* Some points of likeness, especially in the crisped black hair and the *triste* visage, are traceable between Charles the 2nd and his uncle Louis XIII. who, however, was a very far less healthy and vigorous man than his nephew.

† I recollect, fifteen years ago, to have seen this "foggy" complexion most strikingly marked in one of the king's noble descendants; who, certainly, in many respects, resembled the portraits of his royal ancestor.

too common character,—that of a moderately clever and rather witty easy-tempered sensualist, mentally indolent and self-indulgent to a degree, destitute of exalted faith in God, devoid of sincerity and wide benevolence to man; uninspired by a single lofty sentiment or by any prompting of good ambition. Healthy and, therefore, cheerful and of great bodily activity, but wholly incapable of sustained application in toiling for any great or useful object.

We are told by Sheffield,—who is supposed to have been a suitor for the hand of his niece, Queen Anne, and who, certainly, felt that kind of half contemptuous indulgent liking for him which he won, by his easy popular manners, from all but the Burnets and Ossorys of his time, and who, therefore, cannot be suspected of having formed too severe an opinion of his character,—that “He was an illustrious exception to all the common rules of physiognomy; for, with a most saturnine harsh sort of countenance, he was both of a merry and merciful disposition.” In his pleasures, “He was rather abandoned than luxurious.”—“A wonderful mixture! losing all his time, and setting all his heart on the fair sex; yet neither angry with rivals, nor in the least nice as to the being beloved.” “His understanding was quick and lively in little things; and, sometimes, would soar high in great ones; but unable to keep up with any long attention or application.” “Witty in all sorts of conversation” but,—as Buckingham hints, and as Burnet and Rochester have, more plainly, asserted,—constantly in the habit of repeating the same story to the same auditors. “Full of dissimulation and very adroit at it; yet no man easier to be imposed on; for his great dexterity was in cozening himself by gaining a little one way, whilst it cost him ten times as much another, and by caressing those persons most who had deluded him the oftenest, and yet the quickest in the world for spying such ridicule in another. Easy and good-natured to all people in trifles; but, in great affairs, severe and inflexible; in one week’s absence forgetting those servants, to whose faces he could hardly deny anything.” “His temper both of body and mind was admirable, which made him an easy generous lover, a civil obliging husband, a friendly brother, an indulgent father, and a good natured master. If he had been as solicitous about improving the faculties of his mind, as he was in the managing of his bodily health, (tho’ alas! this proved unable to make his life long,) he had not failed to have made it famous.”

We are continually hearing, in Charles's memoirs, of the care which he took of his health. Until latterly, however, this care must have been exercised with the proviso that he would spare himself no indulgence. "Our mutton-eating King" was a large feeder, and was addicted to heavy meat suppers and to rich highly spiced made dishes, and we find only too abundant evidence of the fact that he drank, frequently if not habitually, to great excess.

He appears to have had very little notion of sanitary arrangements and decencies in his way of living. Evelyn says that he took delight in having a number of little spaniels to follow him and lie in his bed-chamber, where he often suffered the bitches to puppy and give suck, which rendered it very offensive, and, indeed, made the whole court nasty and stinking."

On the other hand, he was an early riser, was given to hunting and tennis playing when young, and took much walking exercise, even up to a late period of his existence, walking so rapidly that scarcely any one could long accompany him without falling behind.

It cannot surprise any one that a nervous system, thus misused, should break down, with some sudden shock, as the approach of age began to sap its overstrained energies.*

He appears to have been conscious of failing health for a considerable time previous to his last illness. It was observed that his spirits were depressed and that his natural indolence increased to listlessness and languor. Sheffield Duke of Buckingham tells us that he is of opinion that, in his latter times, there was as much of laziness as of love in all those hours he passed among his mistresses, who, after all, only served to fill his seraglio, while a bewitching kind of pleasure, called sauntering, and talking without any restraint, was the true Sultana queen he delighted in." He had a passion for buying the recipes of quack nostrums, for which

* Dr. Welwood says "He had lived so fast, as might enervate, in a great measure, the natural force of his constitution, and exhaust his animal spirits; and, therefore, he might be more subject to an apoplexy, which is a disease that weakens and locks up these spirits from performing their usual functions. And though, in his late years, he had given up himself more to the pleasures of wine than of women, that might rather be the effects of age than of choice."

he often gave enormous prices;* but, as Lingard remarks, in sickness, his good sense taught him to rely on the skill of his physicians. He imitated his cousin Prince Rupert in trying experiments in practical chemistry; and, according to Burnet, had, during the last months of his life, engaged in an attempt to discover a process of fixing mercury.—†

Latterly, he began to suffer from attacks of Intermittent Fever, the disease to which James the First and Cromwell fell victims. His palaces of Whitehall and Windsor must have been infested with malarious exhalations from Lambeth Marsh and Eton flats; but he, in all probability, owed this disease, mainly, to his habits of feeding the ducks in the straight canal which then ornamented St James's Park, and of fishing in the Itchin and in the Thames at Datchet.

He had, for some time, complained that Windsor did not agree with him;‡ and the Rye House Plot had given him a great dislike for Newmarket and Audley End.§ It was remarked, says Jesse, in describing the latter days of his life, that a closer attention to business followed some fits of ague with which he had, recently, been seized, and there is even reason to believe that he was alive to the precariousness of his existence, and, to a certain extent, anticipated the fatal result. Having employed Sir Christopher Wren to build him a new palace at Winchester, the architect insisting that the building could not be creditably completed in less than two years, though, possibly, it might be finished, after a fashion, in one:—“If it be possible”, said Charles, “let it be completed in that time: a year is a long period in my life”—He died a few weeks afterwards.||

Nevertheless, Burnett says that, all that Winter, the King looked better than he had done for many years; but he had “a humour” in his leg, which looked like the

* One of these was the *Stypticum Regis*—“The Royal Styptic.” According to Bates and Salmon, the whole mystery of preparing this was as follows:—“You must first extract a salt out of the *caput mortuum* of vitriol, with spirit of wine; this salt you must dissolve in four times its weight of fair water, and your styptic is made” “This,” Salmon adds, “is *the great Styptic* which made such a noise in the world, and for the knowledge of which king Charles II. gave a vast sum of money.”

† Pepys tells us that, in 1663, he had the bodies of a man and a woman dissected in his presence by Mr. Pierce, the surgeon, and Dr. Clarke.

‡ Jesse.

§ Cunningham.

|| Life of Sir Dudley North, p. 174.

beginning of gout, so that, for some weeks, he could not walk, as he had been accustomed to do generally, three or four hours a day in the Park. Being in this state, he spent much of his time in his laboratory, engaged in the experiment above alluded to. Upon this point, Dr. Welwood says;—“There might be another natural cause assigned for King Charles’s falling into such a fit as that of which he died, which is this; he had, for some time, an issue in his leg, which ran much and, consequently, must have made a strong revulsion from his head; upon which account, it is probable, it was made. A few weeks before his death, he had let it be dried up, contrary to the advice of his physicians, who told him it would prejudice his health. Their prognostic was partly true in this, that there came a painful tumour upon the place where the issue had been, which proved very obstinate, and was not thoroughly healed up when he died.” Lansdown, in his *Vindication of General Monk* (vol. 2 p. 263), says—“It was always my opinion, and not ill grounded neither, that the king hastened his death by his own quackeries. The last year of his life, he had been much troubled with a sore leg, which he endeavoured to conceal, and trusted too much to his own drugs and medicines”—(possibly he employed the *Stypticum Regis*). “On a sudden, the running stopped and it was then he was seized with an apoplexy; a common case, fatal the moment those sort of sores dry up.”

It appears certain, and this is worthy of remark, that his fatal illness was preceded by other similar attacks—Roger North says that his first attack was at a full levee, when he suddenly fell back in his chair with the exclamation of a dying man. This may have been the “sudden illness” with which it is stated, in Macpherson’s *History*, he was attacked, when at Windsor, in February 1781.* Dr. Welwood,—who was Physician, for Scotland, to King William the Third, but did not attend King Charles in his last illness,—was told, by an eyewitness, of the circumstance, that, on one occasion, in the heat of the popish plot [1678-79,] a priest, who had been admitted to him on secret business, was seen to hurry from the apartment in the utmost consternation. The king had been “suddenly surprized with a fit, accompanied with violent convulsions of the body and

* I have placed in italics some of the passages in the various narratives which most strongly illustrate the nature of the King’s illness.

*contortions of the face, which lasted for some moments,** and, when the priest offered to call for assistance, Charles held him by force till it was over. The king told the priest not to be afraid, for *he had been "troubled with the like before."*†

Dr. Welwood introduces this anecdote with a remark, which goes far to illustrate the true nature of the fits with which the King was attacked.—(It will be borne in mind that Welwood founded his view of this case upon the idea that the fatal attacks were apoplectic.)—He says—"It is known he had been once or twice attacked before with fits that much resembled those of which he, afterwards, died. And yet, as the manner of them is told, *they look rather to have been convulsive motions, than an apoplexy, seeing they were attended with violent contortions of his face and convulsions of his whole body and limbs.*"

The vivid and celebrated description which Evelyn has left us of the manner in which Charles spent his last night in public,—the desecrated Sabbath evening preceding the Friday on which he died,—shows that his habits continued to be dissipated and imprudent almost until the moment at which the great blow crushed him.

"I can never," Evelyn says, "forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God, (it being Sunday evening,) which this day se'nnight, I was witness of, the King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleavland, and Mazarine, &c., and a French boy singing love

* We find passing allusions to other illnesses;—in July 1664, when the King was blooded (Pepys); and in August 1679 when he was attacked, at Windsor, with severe fits of tertian ague. Fears were then entertained for his safety. He recovered by the use of the Jesuit's Bark.—Macpherson. Mackintosh.

† It is mentioned, in Rogers's Recollections, that Talleyrand told a very similar anecdote of Buonaparte. "I attended him," said the statesman, "to Strasbourg, and was alone with him in the house of the Prefet, in one of the chambers there,—when he fell and foamed at the mouth. '*Fermez la porte!*' he cried, and, from that moment, he lay as dead on the floor. Berthier came to the door; '*On ne peut pas entrer!*' the Empress came to the door; '*On ne peut pas entrer!*' In about half an hour, he recovered, but what would have been my situation if he had died? Before day-break, he was in his carriage; and, in less than sixty hours, the Austrian Army had capitulated." Men in very lucrative or elevated positions frequently, and for self-evident reasons, consult their physicians, under a strict pledge of secrecy, when they believe themselves to be threatened by serious disease.

songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2,000 in gold before them; upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflections with astonishment. Six" (five) "days after, all was in the dust!"**

The King's fatal illness, of which there are several narratives by eye witnesses and persons about the court,† commenced on the morning of Monday the 2nd of February 168 $\frac{2}{3}$. On the previous day, he ate little all day, finding himself not well, which he did not confess, and came to Lady Portsmouth at night, (this must have been late—after the amusements in Whitehall, witnessed by Evelyn, were over,) and called for a porringer of spoonmeat. It was made too strong for his stomach; so he ate little of it; and he had an unquiet night.‡ Lingard says,—“a feverish and restless night.” Welwood says, “After he was a-bed, he was overheard to groan most of the night, and, both then and next morning, before he fell into the fit, he complained, first, of a heavy oppression in his stomach and about his heart, and afterwards of a sharp pain in those parts.”

The circumstances of the first attack are somewhat differently stated. In a narrative of the time, from a broadsheet, reprinted in Somers's Tracts, it is stated that, on that day, the King rose early, saying he had not slept well last night, and

* Edition of 1850, page 210, vol. 2.

† The following narrative is taken, principally, from those of the subjoined authorities:—Burnet; Evelyn; Mons. Barillon's Letter to the King, in Appendix to Mr. Fox's History, page 11; Letter to the Rev. Francis Roper, detailing the particulars of the Death of King Charles the Second; Sir H. Ellis's Original Letters, First Series, vol. III. page 333; Mr. Huddleston's "Brief Account;" Ibid 2nd Series, vol. IV; The Life of Bishop Ken by a Layman; Welwood; Jesse's Memoirs of the Court of England during the Reign of the Stuarts; Macpherson's and Lord Macaulay's Histories;—but the main thread of the narrative is taken from a document which has, I believe, never yet passed through the hands of an historian, namely a letter,—unfortunately without signature, but evidently written by a lady, the wife of a person about the Court of Whitehall,—which was, some time since, discovered at Draycot House, the seat of the ancient family of the Longs, and which has been printed in vol. IX., page 277 of "Household Words." This document certainly, in my humble judgment, bears every mark of authenticity, and contains a fuller account of the medical features of King Charles's case than any other with which I have met.

‡ Burnet.

about seven o'clock, coming from his private devotions out of his closet, fell down" &c. In the Draycot M.S., it is said that,—“On Sunday night, he sent to my Lord Chamberlain to send for his doctors to attend him the next morning to consult about his leg, in which he would not own a touch of the gout, but had favoured it about three weeks, and wore a plaster on it of his own prescription, but was returned to some degree of walking again. The doctors came according to his order, and Dr. Scarborough, finding his speech falter, he ran and told the Duke. Dr. King, who was I think called, though no sworn physician, perceived it too; and he went and told my Lord Peterborough, who advised him to return, and be near at hand if any accident should happen. Whilst this passed, he rose out of his bed, and, as he was deploring the death of my Lord Allington,* could not pronounce his name, but stuttered ‘All—All.’—Tom Ho.,† who was on his knees, buckling his garters, turns quick, and looking him in the face, saw it strangely altered, and asked him. ‘Sir, how d’ye do.’ He puffed, as when he is vexed, and would not answer, but rose hastily out of his chair, and went through two rooms into his closet, shutting the door against Tom Ho. who, in care, would have pressed in after him. There he stayed, some say one, some two hours, but, when Mr. H. heard him walk, he ran to W. C.,‡ and bid him go round and persuade him out, which he did with some difficulty. As he opened the door, H. looked again, and seeing him much changed, he ran to the next room and drew in Dr. K. by the arm, not having time to speak. When he returned, his Majesty was sunk down in his chair, with his head on one side, and gave the dreadfulest

* William Lord Allington of Wimondeley, Herts, who was Constable of the Tower towards the end of the reign of King Charles the 2nd,—“A young silly Lord,” says Pepys,—in 1667. We find some confirmation of the statement in the Draycot M.S. in Cibber’s “Apology”—where Colley tells us that, having been called upon by his school-master to make the funeral oration of the King, (whom he had seen feeding his ducks in St. James’s Park, and “whose death made a strong impression upon him, as it drew tears from the eyes of multitudes who looked no further into him than he” (Colley) “did,” he raised his humanity and love of those who served him to such height, that he imputed his death to the shock he received from the Lord Arlington’s being upon the point of death, about a week before him. Cibber may have been correct,—but it was, probably, Lord Allington who was sick, as Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, did not die until July 1685.

† Tom Howard, one of the Grooms of the Chamber.

‡ William Chiffinch, Page of the Back-Stairs.

shriek was ever heard. In the moment, Dr. K. stripped up the sleeve of his waistcoat, (for he was not dressed,) held the vein with his thumb, and opened a vein; but, he not bleeding, he took a bottle out of his pocket and dropped into his nose, then took it by the end, and shook it so as shook his whole head, which brought him out of his convulsion fit, so that he bled freely eighteen ounces.”*

The very curious official Medical History of Charles’s last illness, which is preserved in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries,† does not altogether agree with the above account of what happened previous to the first bleeding, but the statements are not absolutely irreconcilable with each other. It commences,—

“February 2nd, 1684.” “Ad octavam præcisè horam Rex serenissimus Carolus II, lecto recens relicto, dum in cubiculo leniter inambulabat, inordinatum quendam in cerebro sensit motum, cui mox aponia motusque convulsivi vehementiores succedebant Aderant fortè tunc ex Medicis Regiis omnino duo, qui, ut tanto Regum optimi periculo maturè prospicerent, venam ei in brachio dextro aperuerunt, sanguinisque eduxerunt uncias circiter sedecim.”

* To bleed the King was an undertaking which required the previous consent of the Council. That august body, approving of the presence of mind which Dr. Edmund King displayed on this trying occasion,—(Mackintosh cites a report that he tied up the King’s arm with his handkerchief, and opened the vein with a pen-knife),—ordered him a thousand pounds—which he never received. He was afterwards knighted. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society in whose Transactions he published several articles, especially an account of the successful transfusion of forty-nine ounces of blood from a calf to a sheep. In a print, by Williams, he is described as the person, *qui presenti animo (ope divina) sereniss. regem Car. II. a morte subitanea dexterrime eripuit. Feb. 2, 1684.*

† The extracts which we shall make use of are given in Ellis’s Original Letters, second series, vol. IV, page 74, and by Dr. Wadd—in his *Mems, Maxims, and Memoirs*. Unfortunately, they comprise only a portion of the narrative, the reports of Tuesday and Wednesday being omitted. Dr. Munk, the learned librarian of the College of Physicians, would add an important page to History by republishing the entire document. The prescriptions of Tuesday and Wednesday are especially needful, as well as the names of the Medical Men who were present at the autopsy. Sir Henry Hallford says that, among the remedies prescribed, was the *spiritus cranii humani*, 25 drops. The King was fortunate to have escaped a dose of the very *rasura humani cranii* which were then a famous remedy in Epilepsy—as they appear to be still—as we read, in Notes and Queries (N. S. vol. vi.) that, in 1858, a collier’s wife had lately applied to a sexton, near Stamford, for a piece of a human skull to grate into a medicine for her daughter, who was subject to fits!

“Interim et cæteri Medici, per celerrimos nuncios advocati, in Regis subsidium convolarunt,* habitoque inter se consilio, omnem navarunt operam, ut periclitanti Majestati suppetias ferrent præstantaneas.”

Burnet's account is as follows:—“In the morning, one Dr. King, a physician and a chymist, came, as he had been ordered, to wait on him. All the King's discourse to him was so broken that he could not understand what he meant, and the doctor concluded he was under some great disorder either in his mind or in his body. The doctor, amazed at this, went out, and meeting with Lord Peterborough, he said the King was in a strange humour, for he did not speak one word of sense. Lord Peterborough desired he would go in again to the bed-chamber, which he did. And he was scarce come in, when the King, who seemed all the while to be in great confusion, fell down all of a sudden in a fit like an apoplexy: he looked black, and his eyes turned in his head. The physician, who had been, formerly, an eminent surgeon, said it was impossible to save the King's life, if one minute was lost: he would rather venture on the rigour of the law, than leave the King to perish. And so he let him blood. The King came out of that fit: and the physicians approved what Dr. King had done: upon which the privy council ordered him a thousand pound, which yet was never paid him.”

Lord Bruce, afterwards Earl of Aylesbury, in a letter to Mr. Leigh, of Adelstrop, says—“My good King and master falling upon me in his fit, I ordered him to be blooded, and then I went to fetch the Duke of York.”

Welwood, urging the opinion that the King was poisoned, tells us,—“That morning there appeared to everybody about him a ghastliness and paleness in his looks: and, when he sat down to be shaved, just before the fit took him, he could not sit straight, as he used to do, but continued in a stooping posture

* Lord Macaulay says, (quoting Dugdale's correspondence,) that so high did political animosities run, that the presence of some Whig physicians was regarded as an extraordinary circumstance. Dr. Lingard refers to “a very interesting Letter by Mr.” (Dr. P) “Fraser, one of the Medical Attendants, to Sir Robert Southwell, in the London Monthly Miscellany p. 383.” I have been much disappointed in not being able to get a sight of this. Fraser says that there were five bishops and twenty five lords and privy councillors in the King's room. He adds that, every night, “there sate in the room by him four doctors, four lords of the council, three lords of the bed-chamber, three grooms of the bed-chamber, one apothecary and one surgeon, besides several inferior servants.”

with his hand on his stomach, till the fit came. After he had been brought out of it, by opening a vein, he complained of a racking pain in his stomach, and of no indisposition any where else; and, during the whole time of his sickness, and even when he seemed most insensible, he was observed to lay his hand, for the most part upon his stomach, in a moaning posture,"[?] "and continued so to his death. And so violent was the pain that, when all hopes were gone, the physicians were desired to use all their art to procure him an easy death."

At this most important part of the narrative, the extract from the medical report, as given by Ellis and Wadd, unfortunately breaks off; from it, therefore, I learn nothing of what immediately followed the cessation of the first fit. The Draycot M. S. continues,—“By this time, Dr. Wetherby and others were assembled, and they approved of what was done, and applied a warming-pan of coals to his head.* And applied blisters to his back, arms, and thighs.”

[We must here break off to say that counter-irritants appear to have been applied with most unsparing severity. Lingard cites the following statements: “On lui mit des poëles chaudes sur la tête, sans qu’il parut les sentir * * * on lui a appliqué des vesicatoires à la tête, aux epaules, aux bras, et aux jambes, on lui a donné des vomitifs en quantité qui ont fait quelque effet.”† “Le roi estoist dans une chaise, un fer rouge sur la tête, *les dents qu’on lui tenoit ouvertes à force.*”]‡

The narrative continues. “In the mean time, seeing him foam much at mouth, they wished a vomit, and the noise having drawn down James Chace,”§ who was going to

* This rough method of counter-irritation appears to have been, then, a favourite resource, with the court physicians, in cases of apoplexy. Evelyn tells us that, on the 27th of October 1675, “Lord Berkeley coming into council, fell down in the gallery at Whitehall in a fit of Apoplexy, and, being carried into my Lord Chamberlain’s lodgings, several famous doctors were employed all that night; and, with much ado, he was at last recovered to some sense by applying hot fire pans and spirit of amber to his head; but nothing was found so effectual as cupping him on the shoulders. It was almost a miraculous restoration”—vol. 2 pages 102-3.

† Barillon, 12, 14 Fév.

‡ Recit de la mort du feu roi d’Angleterre, by a nun of the Chailot, who wrote it, for the use of the community, from the mouths of James and his Queen, on 10th Sept. 1692, N. S.

§ A John Chase, says the Editor of “Household Words,” was Apothecary to the King’s person. On referring to the edition of Chamberlayne’s *Angliæ Notitia*, for 1707, we find that James Chase Esq. was, then, Apothecary to the person in the court of Queen Anne.

Temple Bar, to a patient, chanced to have one of Wetherby's prescriptions in his pocket, which otherwise could not have been prepared under four hours. He took it, and it brought much phlegm off his stomach. When they opened the blisters, they wrought admirably. He was very sensible, and told Dr. Short that, but now, he could not speak, and asked what ailed him."

"I should have told you that, in his fit, his feet were as cold as ice, and were kept rubbing with hot cloths, which were difficult to get. Some say the Queen rubbed one and washed it in tears. Pillows were brought from the Dutchess of Portsmouth's by Mrs. Roche. His Highness" [the Duke of York] "was first there, then I think the Queen (he sent for her). The Dutchess of Portsmouth swooned in the chamber, and was carried out for air."

[Here occur some discrepancies in the statements of the most reliable authorities. King James, says* that the King, his late brother, asked for the Queen the first time he spoke on Monday, when he came out of his fit, and that she remained present with him as long as her extraordinary passion would give her leave, which, at length, threw her into fits, not being able to speak, while with him. Burnet says "Lady Portsmouth sat in the bed taking care of him as a wife of a husband." It is remarked, in the notes to the edition of Bishop Burnet's works, which we are quoting, that this ill agrees with Lady Portsmouth's words to the French Ambassador, when she pressed him to devise means for the reconciliation of the dying King to the Romish Church; "I cannot, with decency, she said, enter the room, besides that the Queen is constantly there."† Bruce, Earl of Aylesbury, says, that when he took the Duke of York to the bedside, they "found the Queen there, and *the impostor* says it was the Dutchess of Portsmouth." From what follows, however, it would appear that Burnet and Aylesbury may have been both correct in their statements,‡ but that the latter mistook the former (whose narrative is not very clear, in point of time) as to the periods at which Lady Portsmouth

* Life, vol. 1 p. 749, and Ellis's Letters.

† Barillon's Letter.

‡ I observe, on reference to Lord Macaulay's History, (page 247 vol. 1,) that he considered that Aylesbury's and Burnet's statements did not contradict each other.

sat with the King. It was, probably, not difficult to overcome that lady's scruples on the score of propriety; and, when the wronged but gentle minded wife retired, worn out and dismayed, from that lamentable scene of suffering, the unscrupulous mistress appears to have taken her place. It is mentioned, in Bishop Ken's Life by Hawkins, that (apparently on Thursday,) when the Duchess of Portsmouth came into the room, the Bishop prevailed upon his majesty to have her removed. It would appear that, on Thursday afternoon, when the King's life began to be despaired of, the Queen was again by his bedside, although unable to speak to him from agitation, and was carried away hysterical.]

The Draycot MS. goes on to say that,—“Nelly roared to a disturbance, and was led out, and lay roaring behind the door. The Dutchess wept and returned; the Princess” (afterwards Queen Anne) “was not admitted, he was so ghastly a sight (his eyeballs turned that none of the blacks were seen, and his mouth drawn up to one eye); so they feared it might affect the child she goes with. None could come in by the common door, but by an odd side door, to prevent a crowd, but enough, at convenient times, to satisfy all.”

The progress of the case, during the two following days,—Tuesday and Wednesday, the 3rd and 4th of August,—is not (in the absence of this portion of the official Medical Report,) very clearly made out. All authorities concur in stating that, after the first fit, the King gradually recovered consciousness and speech. In the Draycot narrative (the sequence of which we have been compelled to alter slightly) we are told, that “*In the night, he was taken with something like a return, between eleven and one, but it passed easily.* The next day, he talked and rallied and, the doctors forbidding him, he said that order would have killed Harry Killigrew, but he would obey it.”

Here follows an extraordinary revelation, until now, unknown to our historians. There is, however, in it nothing incongruous with the known character of Lady Portsmouth; and so, in all probability, the Duke of York considered, and, therefore, did little more than mention the fact, subsequently.

“The grief of the Dutchess of Portsmouth did not hinder packing and sending many strong boxes to the French ambassador's; and, the second day of the King's sickness, the chamber being kept dark (you know)—one who comes out of the light does not see very soon, and much less one who

is between them and the light there is—so she came and went of the inside of the bed, and sat down o't, and taking the King's hand in her's, felt his two great diamond rings; and, thinking herself alone, asked him what he did with them on, and said she would take them off, and did it at the same time, and, looking up, saw the Duke on the other side, steadfastly looking on her, at which she blushed much, and held them towards him, and said 'Here Sir, will you take them?'—'No Madam,' said he, 'they are as safe in your hands as mine. I will not touch them, till I see how things will go.' But, since the King's death, she has forgot to restore them, though he has not that she took them,—for he told the story."

"Since this, every night about the hours of twelve or one, he found an alteration, something of cold sweat, and some shivering." Evelyn says that, after the first fit, on Monday, "He still complained, and was relapsing, often fainting, with sometimes epileptic symptoms, till Wednesday, for which he was cupped, let blood in both jugulars, had both vomit and purges, that so relieved him that on Thursday" (morning) "hopes of recovery were signified in the public Gazette." We shall, presently, see that these hopes were not of long duration.

The writer of the Draycot narrative is not certain whether it was on Wednesday or Thursday that the King was bled from the jugulars. It is clear, however, that it was on Wednesday. She says "He was let blood in one jugular vein, and Pierce* missed, (for the King's are not the best chirurgeons,) then he struck the other, which bled well. They had done it there the first day, *but the convulsions were so strong and sudden that they could not*; yet when they gave him, after his vomit had wrought, a purge or two which worked mighty well, and, the second day he prescribed himself purge or erapiora, which did the best in the world, as did every thing he took so that it was a wonder that he died; but it was abundance of blood, and a transport of it to his head, and it discharged itself as it could, partly on his lungs, which were full of it, and partly, as I guess, at the ends of the arteries (if any are in the head), for it fell down between the thick skin and the flesh on his right shoulder and arm, in which he

* The editor of "Household Words," notes that Pearse or Pierce was Chyrurgeon General to the King's person, and is the Pierce so often mentioned by Pepys.

complained of pain two days before his death, and after” [death] “the settling of the blood was there even the forepart of his shoulder, which is only usual in the hips, and that behind” (this is an allusion to cadaveric lividity) “Doubtless”—the writer adds.—“Many things were prejudicial that were done, had his disease been known, but he ever laughed at physicians, and would never come under their hands; so none knew his constitution since Fraiser* died, who told him, the last time he saw him, that if he would be let blood spring and fall, and take a purge or two in those seasons, he might live to a great age, but he never would do it.”

It appears certain that, late in the case—on Wednesday or on Thursday morning, either the King himself or his physicians discovered that he was suffering from Intermittent Fever. The writer of the Draycot Letter says.—Thursday, † the doctors thought it would conclude in an Intermitting Fever, and gave him the Jesuit’s powder four times; afterwards, he found his nose stopped, that he could not breathe at it, or scarce at his throat, yet fell asleep and slept two hours at least, and waked and asked what o’clock, and said he was much refreshed with that sleep. Evelyn, in his account of the death, (under the date of the 4th February, but evidently not written then,) says, after alluding to the transitory improvement in the symptoms on Thursday Morning—“but that day, about noon, the physicians thought

* There were, at least, three medical men, of the name of Frazier or Fraser, attached to the court in this reign;—and it is not always easy to distinguish between them.

Sir *Alexander* Fraser, a man of eccentric manners, who appears to have been among the attendants of the King in Holland, who afforded medical aid to the Princess Royal in her fatal illness, and who got into difficulties with Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey. Pepys makes a very coarse allusion to the manner in which his professional services were said to be made useful at Court.

It is mentioned, in Weld’s History of the Royal Society, that King Charles’s last communication to the Society, (which he latterly neglected,) was an order to Sir Robert Gourdon to send the Society a Recipe to cure Hydrophobia invented by Dr. *Thomas* Frazier, his physician.

Another, of the name C. Frasier, was among those who attended the King in his last illness.

† From Sir Thomas Millington’s account, which will be cited presently, it would appear that the Bark was given on Wednesday. The King could scarcely have taken four doses on Thursday.

him feverish. This they seemed glad of, as being more easily allayed and methodically dealt with than his former fits; so as they prescribed the famous Jesuit's powder; but it made him worse, and some very able doctors who were present did not think it a fever, but the effect of his frequent bleeding and other sharp operations used by them about his head, so that, probably, the powder might stop the circulation, and renew his former fits, which now made him very weak."*

According to King James's narrative, the physicians despaired of his life on Wednesday, the 14th, of February. (This has led some to assert that the publication of the favorable report in the Gazette, on Thursday morning, was only a feint to allay popular excitement.) In the course of the afternoon of Thursday, the 5th, it became evident that the monarch's life was in imminent danger. Burnet says that "On this day, a second fit returned."

And now occurred an event which is equally remarkable as an historical record, and as an evidence of King Charles's mental and bodily condition on the eve of his decease. The King had long inclined, in secret, to the Roman Catholic religion—it is believed by many that he never held the Protestant faith—but this is a question which has no place here. The Bishops, who were now constant in attendance, had, for some time, urged him to receive the consolations of religion. Dr. Ken, who had lately been raised to the see of Bath and Wells, knowing how much the King had put off to that last point, "gave a close attendance by the royal bed, without any intermission at least for three

* Evelyn mentions a fact which is of great interest, as showing how severely the King had suffered from Intermittent Fever on a previous occasion, (probably in August 1679) when bark cured him. Under the date of 29th of August 1695, he says that he had conversed with the Marquis of Normanby, [John Sheffield, lately Earl of Mulgrave, and afterwards, Duke of Buckingham,] "concerning the *Quinquina* which the physicians would not give to the King, at a time when, in a dangerous ague, it was the only thing that could cure him (out of envy because it had been brought into vogue by Mr. Tudor, an apothecary), till Dr. Short, to whom the King sent to know his opinion of it privately, he being reputed a Papist, (but who was, in truth a very honest good christian,) sent word to the King that it was the only thing which could save his life, and then the King enjoined his Physicians to give it to him, which they did, and he recovered. Being asked by this Lord why they would not prescribe it, Dr. Lower said it would spoil their practice, or some such expression, and at last, confessed it was a remedy fit only for Kings."

Dr. Short and Dr. Lower were opposed to each other in religion, politics, and practice. This fact may account for the "Whig Physician's" sneer at the "Tory Doctor's" prescription.

whole days and nights, watching at proper intervals to suggest pious and proper thoughts and speculations on so serious an occasion"* Burnett† says, evidently speaking of some time antecedent to Thursday.—“ The Bishop of London spoke a little to him to dispose him to prepare for whatever might be before him: to which the King answered not a word, but that was imputed partly to the Bishop’s cold way of speaking, and partly to the ill opinion they had of him at court as too busy in opposition to popery. Sancroft made a very weighty exhortation to him; in which he used a good degree of freedom, which he said was necessary, since he was going to be judged by one who was no respecter of persons. To him the King made no answer neither; nor yet to Ken, though the most in favor with him of all the Bishops. Some imputed this to an insensibility; of which too visible an instance appeared, since Lady Portsmouth sat in the bed taking care of him as a wife of a husband. Others guessed truer, that it would appear he was of another religion.”

Lingard says—“ Early on the Thursday morning” [this is certainly a mistake, it could not have been before the afternoon—as we have seen that there appeared to be signs of improvement until about noon,] “ Ken, of Bath and Wells, seized a favorable moment to warn the monarch of his danger, and the air of resignation with which the announcement was received encouraged him to read the office appointed for the visitation of the sick. When he came to the rubrick respecting confession, he paused—observed that it was a matter not of obligation, but of choice—and, receiving no answer, asked whether the King repented of his offences against the law of God. Charles replied in the affirmative, and the prelate, having pronounced the usual form of absolution, asked if he might proceed to the administration of the sacrament. The King appeared to take no notice of this question; but Ken renewed the proposal with a louder voice, and Charles replied, in a faint tone, that there was still time enough. The elements were, however, brought and placed on a table: and the question was repeatedly asked by the

* Hawkins’ Life of Ken.

† Sir James Mackintosh says that “ Burnett’s hearsay account is a sort of fiction founded on facts.”—His account of what passed between the king and the ministers of the Protestant religion has been the subject of much controversy,—which is beyond our present object.

bishop, who could extort no other answer from the dying man but that 'He would think of it.'"

At five o'clock, the physicians reported to the Council that the King's life was in great danger. Previous to this, the Duke of York had been urged both by his own wife, as Lingard says at the instance of the Queen, and by Mons. Barillon at the request of the Duchess of Portsmouth, to obtain for him the ministrations of a Roman Catholic priest, but this, in the existing state of the law, was a matter of great difficulty. When the King's danger became public, Pere Mansuete, a Capuchin Friar, confessor to the Duke* went, at the suggestion of Benedict Gibbon of Westcliffe, a Benedictine Missionary, and told James that now was the time to take care of his soul, and that it was his duty to tell the King so.†

About six or seven in the evening, having motioned to the company to withdraw to the other end of the room, the Duke knelt down by his brother's pillow and asked whether he might send for a Catholic priest. "For God's sake do!" was the King's reply: but, he immediately added,—“Will it not expose you to danger?” James replied that he cared not for the danger, and immediately despatched a trusty messenger for a priest, and cleared the chamber of all but the Earls of Bath and Feversham.‡ The medical men withdrew to an adjoining closet, the door of which, says M. Barillon, was locked upon them. At first, it proved a matter of difficulty to find a priest; for, then, to admit a proselyte to the Romish Church was a capital offence.§ However, one John Huddleston, a Benedictine monk, an ignorant but earnest and true hearted man, who had saved the King's life after the

* The Father is several times mentioned in the Ellis Correspondence, whence it appears that he continued in the office of confessor to the king until 1686, when, being opposed by the Queen Dowager, Lord Tyrconnell and others of influence, he was ousted in favour of Father Petre.

† Huddleston's Memoirs, and Notes and Queries, Second Series, vols. I, page 247 and IX. p. 470. There has been much discussion as to who first suggested the necessity of sending for a Priest. Barillon says that the Duchess of Portsmouth broached the matter to him. King James told the nuns of Chaillot that the suggestion first came from the Queen to the Duchess of York. Doubtless, several persons entertained the idea, and took action upon it.

‡ Barillon. Lingard.

§ Macaulay.

battle of Worcester, was,—(after some delay in procuring the host, and in receiving instruction in the religious function which he was about to perform, apparently for the first time in his life,)—disguised in a cloak and perriwig, and introduced by the Queen's back stairs, by Chiffinch, to the Chamber of the dying King. Huddleston has left an account* of what passed on that occasion.

It must have been about nine o'clock when the priest approached the dying King, who appears to have been perfectly sensible,† to have declared, at some length, his desire to die in the faith and communion of the Roman Catholic Church, to have repeated a short act of contrition, after the priest, in a loud and audible voice; and, upon being asked whether he did not also desire to receive the Sacrament, to have replied.—“If I am worthy, pray fail not to let me have it.” The king raised himself up to receive the Sacrament, saying, “Let me meet my Heavenly Lord in a better posture in my bed”; but Mr. Huddleston begged him to repose himself; “God Almighty who saw his heart, would accept his good intention.” The king appears to have gone through the whole of the offices with perfect clearness of mind,—Huddleston says that he “made an exact confession of his whole life,”—but, according to Cardinal Howard, the host stuck in his throat, and the Earl of Feversham was obliged to go to the door and call for a glass of water.

Burnet says, that Huddleston's interview lasted only half an hour, Ellis says three quarters of an hour. The company were then re-admitted. Nearly all authorities notice that the King appeared greatly relieved at about this time. It has been doubted whether the Bishops were re-admitted after the Roman Catholic priest left the king's chamber. We have, already, seen that even King James's memory contradicted itself upon this important point. The evidence of the majority of our authorities combines to show that they were; and that, little imagining what had been done in their absence, they continued to press upon him the consolations of religion, which he

* Ellis's Original Letters, 2nd series Vol. IV. page 78.

† In the narrative reprinted in Somers's Tracts, the King is represented as addressing a high-flown speech to Huddleston, upon his entering the chamber; but it appears that only a few natural words passed. According to M. Barillon,—“Sir,” said the Duke, “this man once saved your life and now comes to save your soul”. Charles replied, “He is welcome”

appears to have evaded as far as possible.* In a letter, evidently from a clergyman, (considered to have been the chaplain to the Bishop of Ely)† we find many remarkable facts—although the reverend writer (who is spoken of in the Pictorial History as “a furious high churchman,” and “a man looking to promotion,”) was, certainly, greatly misled in his estimate of what the King said and did, by his anxiety to believe that Charles was a sincere Protestant, although the fact of the King’s obstinate refusal to receive the Holy Sacrament ought to have warned him against committing himself, so confidently as he did, upon this point. He says—“He showed himself, throughout his sickness, one of the best natured men that ever lived; and, by the abundance of fine things he sayd in reference to his soul, he showed he dyed as good a christian: and the physicians, who have seen so many leave this world, doe say they never saw the like of his courage, so unconcerned was he at death, though sensible to all degrees imaginable to the very last. He often, in extremity of pain, would say he suffered, but thanked God that he did so, and that he suffered patiently.”

The writer of the Draycot Letter says—“My husband being there, with many others, he said, Gentlemen, I have suffered very much and more than any of you can imagine, but not with impatience. At Eleven o’clock on Thursday night, he asked the hour, and when they told him, he answered, ‘Then at half an hour after twelve I shall depart’”—(This presentiment is worthy of remark. We have seen that, every night at about midnight, there had been a feverish exacerbation—the King, evidently, apprehended this, and believed that, exhausted as he was, the next paroxysm would carry him off.)

The Bishop of Ely’s Chaplain continues. “He every now and then would seem to wish for death, and beg the pardon of the standers by, and those that were employed about him, that he gave them so much trouble; that he hoped the work was almost over: he was weary of this world: he had enough

* Macpherson cites a M. S. authority to the effect that, when the doors were thrown open, six prelates, who had before attended the King, were sent for to give him the Sacrament. Bishop Ken read the visitation of the sick; and, after the King said that he repented of his sins, the absolution. *That Prelate then administered the Sacrament The King assisted with seeming devotion at the service;* but, his mouth being distorted with fits, and his throat contracted, he could not swallow the elements. He, however, professed his earnest desire and his satisfaction in the Church of England.” This statement is evidently, full of error and confusion.

† Ellis’s Letters 1st Series vol. 3, p. 333.

of it: and he was going to a better. There was so much affection and tenderness expressed between the two Royal brothers, the one upon the bed, the other almost drowned in tears upon his knees and kissing of his dying brother's hand, as could not but extremely move the standers by. He thank'd our present King for having always been the best of brothers and friends, and begged his pardon for the trouble he had given him from time to time, and for the several risks of fortune he had run on his account. He told him he now freely left all, and begged of God to bless him with a prosperous reign" [this appears to have been at about two o'clock] "He recommended all his children to his care by name, except the Duke of Monmouth, whom he was not heard so much as to make mention of. He blessed all his children, one by one, pulling them to him on to the bed, and then the Bishops moved him, as he was the Lord's anointed, and the father of his country, to bless them also, and all that were there present, and in them the whole body of his subjects: whereupon, the room being full, all fell down upon their knees, and he raised himself in his bed, and very solemnly blessed them all. This was so like a good Prince, and the solemnity of it so very surprizing, as was extreamly moving, and caused a general lamentation throughout: and no one hears it without being much affected with it; being new and great." * * * The Queen, "sent a message to him to excuse her absence, and to beg his pardon if ever she had offended him in all her life. He replied, alas! poor woman! she beg my pardon! I beg her's with all my heart."

The reverend author of the above account has not given the whole particulars of what is said to have happened after the king received the offices of religion from Mr. Huddleston. Bishop Burnet's narrative of what subsequently occurred is very full, but is, in many respects questionable, especially in regard to what was said and done by Bishop Ken and the other Protestant ecclesiastics. His narrative should be read with that given in Ken's Life, by a Layman. The discussion involves points which would be irrelevant here; I shall, therefore, adhere to the Draycot MS.,—in which we are told that the King,—“had with him, waiting without (when he was not well enough to pray) the Bishops of London and Durham, Deans of the closet and chapel, and was visited by his grace of Canterbury,

but none took so much pains as Bath and Wells" [Ken] "nor were so well versed in that sort of Divinity; but, oh! I tremble to tell you, would never be persuaded to receive the communion, though he seemed to join in prayer, and audibly said 'amen.' I have heard he was once private, with only three in the room, (except some one waited privately in another, hard by till that vacancy.) What passed there, none can tell that will. He recommended all his relations, that he considered, to his brother. When he saw he should die, he first asked his pardon for all he had done to him which looked unkind, and said he was forced to it; then desired him to be kind to the Queen and to his four children by the Dutchess of Cleveland, and made them kneel down and desired him to embrace them; the like he did to the rest and the king named them, but could not bring out Bur" [supposed to be the Earl of Burford, afterwards Duke of St. Albans, his son by Eleanor Gwyn,] "but put him into his hands, and desired him to take care of his education, for he will be spoiled else; he desired him to be well to Portsmouth, and not let poor Nelly starve. The King, that is now, repeated over all the children, except Monmouth, whom his father had not named. He recommended neither church nor state nor servant nor debts. This King" [James the Second] "behaved himself from the beginning to the end the best in the world: he wept bitterly, and without affectation, he watched and kneeled by him till he could scarce rise or stand, and paid duty and respect to the very last moment."

Severe paroxysmal attacks of pain appear to have recurred from time to time, during the night. According to Burnet, "he said he was burnt up within, of which he complained often, but with great decency." About six in the morning of Friday the 6th of February, he complained of pain in the side accompanied with difficulty in breathing, to remove which eight ounces of blood were taken from his arm.* According to the Draycot M.S. "He was then let blood, by order" (!) "of the Council though the physicians despaired of life."

Lord Macaulay tells us that as "the morning light began to peep through the windows of Whitehall, Charles desired the attendants to pull aside the curtains, that he might have one look at the day. He remarked that it was

* Lingard.—Evelyn says twelve ounces.

time to wind up a clock which stood near his bed. These little circumstances were long remembered, because they proved beyond dispute that, when he declared himself a Roman Catholic, he was in full possession of his faculties." They also serve our present purpose, as being strong evidence of the fact that the King's disease was not Apoplexy.

We now recover the broken chain of the Physicians' Report which however, unfortunately, contains, here, little but encomia upon the Duke of York and themselves. On the morning of the 6th it is said:—

"Cæterum (Eheu!) intempestâ jam nocte S. R. vires usque adeo infractæ videbantur ut *totus* Medicorum Chorus ab omni spe destitutus animam desponderit ne tamen ullâ in re officio suo viderentur deesse, generosissimum illud cardiacum instituunt.

R. Antidoti Raleighanæ ℥i.

Julap. Perlat. cochl. 5.

Sp. Salis Armoniac. Succinat. gtt. 20.

M. Statim propinentur.*

* It is interesting and important to our enquiry to be able to gather, from the composition of this "most generous cardiack," the view which the medical attendants took, almost at the last moment, of the nature of the case, or, at all events, of the nature of the symptoms which they had to treat,—in administering a diaphoretic reputed of great efficacy in Fever, a stimulant, and a medicine of approved virtue in cases of epilepsy.

With regard to Raleigh's Antidote, it was the diaphoretic cordial which Raleigh sent from his prison in the Tower to Prince Henry—(who had said that none but the King his father would keep such a bird in such a cage)—when dying of fever. We are told, in Birch's Life of that Prince, that "whether or not it" [this cordial] "should be given him was the subject of some deliberation" * * * "but, soon falling into his former extremities, the cordial sent by Sir Walter Raleigh, after having been tasted and proved, was, with the leave and advice of the Lords of the Council then present, given to him. But this was likewise in vain, except that, forcing the spark of life still remaining in him, it threw him again into a sweat; after which, as before. But this was of short continuance" &c. and death rapidly approached. Some interesting particulars regarding this Medicine, (which is now represented by the *Aromatic Confection* of the London Pharmacopœia) will be found in Whitehead's Life and Times of Sir W. Raleigh.

It is a very remarkable fact that the "Cordial" appears to have been sent to Prince Henry at the request of his mother, Anne of Denmark, who had experienced its good effects and who had such absolute faith in Raleigh's skill in medicine that, in her last illness, she was attended, exclusively, by physicians chosen for their acquaintance with Sir Walter's recipes. In writing to the Queen, Raleigh stated his conviction

“ Novissimo huic mœstissimoque Medicorum Conventui

that the remedy would certainly cure the Prince or any other of a fever,—except in case of poison—(yet, on the day of his execution, Raleigh had to thank God that his fever had not taken him at that time.) The Queen showed this letter, and could never be dissuaded from the opinion that her son was murdered.

It appears not improbable that we have, here, one of the elues to the origin of the suspieion that King Charles was poisoned.

Under the auspices of Charles the Second, Dr. Le Febure published a treatise entitled “Deseours sur le Grand Cordial de Sir Walter Raleigh” which was published in 1665, having been previously translated into English. The reeipe is given by Le Febure; but Sir Kenhelm Digby and Sir Alexander Frazer gave it with other ingredients.

R. Zedoary in coarse powder, and Saffron each 1½ lbs.

Distilled water 3 pints.

Macerate for 24 hours, then press and strain. Reduce the strained liquor, by evaporation, to 1½ pints—to which add the following, rubbed to a very fine powder:—

Compound Powder of Crabs' claws 16 oz.

Cinnamon and Nutmegs, each 2 „

Cloves 1 „

Smaller Cardamom Seeds, husked ½ „

Double refined Sugar 2 lbs.

Make a confection.

Evelyn, in his Diary under the date 1662, says “I accompanied his majesty to Monsieur le Febure, his chemist (who had formerly been my master in Paris) to see his accurate preparation for the composing Sir Walter Raleigh's rare Cordial. He made a learned discourse before his Majesty, in French, on each ingredient.”

It is almost needless to add that it would never enter the imagination of any physician, of the present day, to employ the Aromatic Confection as a Febrifuge.

According to Bate, the *Julapium Perlatum* was composed as follows.—“Waters of Citrons, Borrage, Bawm, Black Cherries A. ℥iij; Spirit of Black Cherries or Spirit of Citrons ℥i, double refined Sugar ℥vi, Pearls prepared ℥ijs, Stir them well S. A. give five or six spoonfuls at a time in any fainting.”

“It is a very good eordial, absorbs acids by virtue of its fixt volatile Alkali which it contains; and, thereby, revives the fainting and drooping spirits.”

The *Spirit of Sal Ammoniack with Amber* was—“made by rectifying the volatile Spirit of Sal Ammoniack (whether made with Quicklime, Salt of Tartar or Pot-ashes) upon the fine powder of Amber.” This preparation was held to be of great efficaey in “opening all obstructions of the viscera,” “working by urine,” and “curing intermitten fevers” by “carrying off the morbifick cause”—“chiefly by urine” It was “highly deobstruative and sudorifick and, therefore, good in Pleurisies, Obstructions of the Lungs and malign and pestilential Diseases” It was used “especially in all *Epileptick and Hysterick Cases*, and where vapors are apt to afflict the patient.”

aderant, C. Scarborough, (1) E. Dickenson, (2) E. Browne, (3) R. Brady, (4) T. Short, C. Farell, T. Witherby, T. Millington, (5) R. Lower, (6) P. Barwick, (7) J. Le Febure. (8)

“Aderat etiam inclytus ille heros, Regis frater unicus Regnique optimo jure hæres. Jacobus hinc Eboraci quidem et Albaniae Dux illustrissimus, hodie vero Britanniarum augustissimus Monarcha, qui summa in Regem pietate et plusquam fraterno amore affectus, de illius salute adeo sollicitus fuit, ut a decumbentis lecto vix unquam decedere sustinuerit, nunc totus in luctu versans, nunc sedulus exequendis medicorum consiliis ipsemet invigilans alias ab Archiatro Cœlesti opem auxiliumque ardentissimis precibus votisque et gemitibus subinde effusis implorans, ut omnibus constiterit maluisse ipsum charissimi fratris consortio perfrui, quam Sceptro, frustra reluctantibus Fatis. Nam post tot amicorum vota et suspiria, post omne genus medelæ a fidissimis juxta et erudissimis Medicis tentatum, Regum optimus orthopnoea lethali ex improvise correptus, quæ cum subinde violentiam remitteret, mox acrius recruderesceret, fomite mali perpetuo superstite, tandem toto naturæ robore dolorum immanitate attrito, mortalem coronam placide deposuit, ut acciperet immortalem”
 “Expiravit Februar. sexto paulo post meridiem, anno ætatis quinquagesimo quarto ad finem decurrente.”

The above account of the manner of the King's death, as recorded by his Physicians, is, doubtless, the most correct. Most of the other narratives agree with this. Evelyn says that, although the bleeding relieved the pain in his side,

(1) Sir. Charles Scarborough was an excellent anatomist and assisted Harvey in his work “De. Generatione Animalium”: He was also one of the first mathematicians of his day. Vide Granger.

(2) Vide an account of the learned Dr. Edmund Dickinson, Physician to the King, in Biographia Britannica. Evelyn speaks of him as “the famous chemist” and a “a very learned person.”

(3) Edward the only surviving son of the author of Religio Medici. He was Physician to the King and to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and died President of the College of Physicians in 1710.

(4) Dr. Robert Brady Regius Professor of Physic in the University of Cambridge. Was chiefly celebrated as the author of an history which, it was considered, formed the basis of Hume's History of England.

(5) Sir Thomas Millington, a distinguished anatomical teacher.

(6) Vide Granger and the Biographia Britannica.

(7) Peter Barwick was brother to the celebrated John Barwick, the Dean of St. Paul's. He was remarkable for charity and benevolence, and was considered very successful in the treatment of small pox and fever.

(8) The Chemist, vide supra.

this relief did not continue,—“for, being now in much pain, and struggling for breath, he lay dozing; and, after some conflicts, the physicians despairing of him, he gave up the ghost.”

Philip Second Earl of Chesterfield, who was also an eyewitness of the king's last moments, (having watched two whole nights with him) wrote to the Earl of Arran that it was very touching to see “this brave and worthy prince lie in the horrid agony of death, with all the pains imaginable upon him, from six at night till twelve the next day, at which time he died.”*

“At half past eight,” we are told,† “he could only speak with extreme difficulty; as long, however, as his speech lasted, he was heard pronouncing the name of God, and begging pardon for his offences. Even when he had lost all power of utterance, he showed what was passing in his mind, by lifting up his hands, and paying attention to the prayers.” The author of the Draycot Letter says that, after the bleeding,—“He died as peaceful as a lamb and had his sense, though not his speech, to the very last.”

She continues—“They left the corpse in bed, covered with a sheet till next day, that he was opened—I think it was till Sunday, and, in that time, any one might see him. They say he looked then as in health; his blisters having made him raw, and the covering made him stink without, but his inwards were all good and sound, and might have lasted many years, though one little part of one side of his lungs was tainted or perished,”—(this, probably, refers to the pleural adhesion which was discovered.) The above passage rationally explains Welwood's statement,—in those times, strongly calculated to support a suspicion of empoisonment,—that “His body stunk within a few hours after his death, notwithstanding the coldness of the season, that the people about him were extremely offended with the smell; which is a thing very extraordinary in one of his strong and healthful constitution, and is not a proper consequent of a mere apoplectical distemper.”

The Medical Report of the autopsy is as follows.

* I have not quoted Lord Chesterfield's account more largely, as it nearly agrees with that of the Bishop of Ely's Chaplain,—dwelling chiefly upon the King's christian resignation, fortitude, and consideration for those who stood around him.

† Jesse, citing Barillon's Letter, and one by Mr. J. Aprice to Mr. Lynwood.

“ In Caroli Secundi augustissimi Britanniarum Regis corpore aperto post mortem reperiiebantur.

1.° In cerebri cortice venæ et arteriæ super modum repletæ.

2.° Cerebri tum ventriculi omnes serosâ quâdam materiâ inundati, tum ipsa substantia consimili humore haud leviter imbuta.

3.° Thoraci dextri lateris Pulmones Pluræ tenaciter adhærentes* sinistra vero plane liberi, quemadmodum ex naturæ instituto in sanis esse solet.

4.° Pulmonum substantia neutiquam culpanda quidem sed sanguine referta.

5.° Cor amplum firmumque, et in omnibus rectissimè formatum.

6.° In infimo† ventre nihil præter naturale, nisi quod hepatis color ad lividitatem inclinaret, forte a sanguinis inibi restitantis pleonasmò, quo renes et lien cernebantur suffarcinati.”

Sir Henry Ellis says, that the total of the “medicorum chorus,”—as appears from the signatures to the different prescriptions,—included also the Doctors Gu. Charleton,‡ Edm. King, C. Frazier, Fr. Mendes and M. Lister.§ In all sixteen.

The results of this post mortem examination were looked for by many inquisitive and suspicious enquirers. The most popular sovereign in Europe had died, almost suddenly, at a time when it was generally supposed that he enjoyed a full

* It is not quite clear whether this adhesion was a trace of old or of recent pleurisy. If the latter existed, it would, of course, account for the pain in the side and the difficulty in breathing of which the King complained; but, from the manner in which the lesion is spoken of, I am inclined to believe that the adhesion was of old date.

† Wadd has this word “intimo,”—which appears to be the correct reading.

‡ Granger describes Dr. Walter Charleton as “A man of great natural endowments, and one of the most universal scholars of his time.” He was Physician in Ordinary to Charles I. and was continued in that station by his son whom he attended when in exile. Granger doubts whether he was retained by Charles the Second after the Restoration. He was, in the reign of William III., elected President of the College of Physicians.

§ Dr. Martin Lister was the son of Dr. Matthew Lister,—Physician to Anne of Denmark and, afterwards, to Charles the First,—by the beautiful Susanna Temple Lady Thornhurst. He was one of the most distinguished fellows of the Royal Society in the reign of Charles II., and was author of several works on Medicine and Natural Philosophy,—vide Granger.

prospect of long life.* It must have appeared extremely strange that the host of eminent physicians who watched the whole progress of his malady could not give it a name, or afford a plain and consistent answer to the question, to which the non-professional public always demand an unhesitating reply,—“What did he die of?” That public, led by those who imparted their suspicions to Burnet, Patrick and Welwood, clearly perceived that this was not a case of apoplexy. Lord Macaulay remarks that the “doctors who deliberated on the King’s case contradicted each other and themselves. Some of them thought that his fit was epileptic and that he should be suffered to have his doze out. The majority pronounced him epileptic. * * * Then it was determined to call his complaint a Fever, and to administer doses of Bark. One physician, however, protested against this course and assured the Queen that his brethren would kill the King among them. Nothing better than dissension and vacillation could be expected from such a multitude of advisers.”

apople

Then, as now,—whenever a death, affecting the happiness and the interests of many, occurred somewhat unexpectedly,—search was to be made for some one to be blamed. Sixteen court physicians could not be accused of malapraxis or of ignorance. They *must* know all: there was, therefore, some dark secret to be ferreted out. Unhappily, there was an appearance of mystery and even of trickery in the conduct of those who conducted the post mortem examination. I think it will be easy to show that this circumstance readily admits of an explanation which exonerates every one from blame;—but this explanation was never conceded, and the medical attendants have remained, until now, under the gravest suspicion of concealing an atrocious crime.

According to Welwood. “When his body was opened, there was not sufficient time given for taking an exact observation of his stomach and bowels, which one would think ought chiefly to have been done, considering the violent pains he had there: and, when a certain physician seemed to be more inquisitive than ordinary about the condition of these parts, he was taken aside and reproved for his *needless*

* Sheffield said, “If his death had some appearance of being untimely, it may be partly imputed to his extreme healthy constitution, which made the world as much surprized at his dying before 60, as if nothing but an ill accident could have killed him.”

curiosity.” We shall return, presently, to what is said to have happened at the post mortem examination; only adding, now, that Burnet mentions that “Le Fevre, a French physician, told him he saw a blackness in his shoulder, upon which he made an incision and saw it was all mortified.” We have seen that this appearance was noticed by the author of the Draycot letter. Morbid appearances were not much understood at that time. This may have been merely the result of the King’s fall, when first attacked, or of a blow received in removing him to his bed, or the vesicants, so freely applied to his shoulders and arms, may have produced a severer effect than was intended at that part, or the appearance might have been mere cadaveric lividity. According to Burnet,—“the King’s body was indecently neglected: some parts of his inwards and some pieces of the fat were left in the water in which they were washed: all which were so carelessly looked after, that the water being poured out at a scullery hole that went to a drain, in the mouth of which a grate lay, these were seen lying on the grate many days after”.

We now arrive at the object of our enquiry,—the Cause of King Charles’s death.

Notice has, already, been taken of Welwood’s suggestion that the attacks to which the King had long been subject were convulsive, and of the belief of several of the physicians present that the last attacks were epileptic. Sir James Mackintosh (whose medical knowledge was such as to enable him to form an opinion upon the subject,) appears almost to have perceived the true nature of this case. He observes—“The only question, indeed, seems to be, whether it” [the King’s death] “should be charged upon Nature or upon his Doctors. They treated him for apoplexy, whilst, it has been said, his case was epilepsy” which, according to Doctor Stokeman, a physician of the time, whose opinion is quoted in North’s Examen, was a fatal error. He also insists upon King James’s statement to the nuns of Chaillot (already cited here) that, in his first fit, it required force to open his teeth, as an evidence that the attack was not apoplectic.*

* It is worthy of notice that, in one of his orations, *on the Deaths of some Eminent Persons of Antiquity*, Sir Henry Hallford maintained the opinion that Charles the 2nd died of apoplexy. I have only been able to meet with an abstract of this oration, in the London Medical Gazette for January 31st 1835, and may not, therefore, be in full possession of that learned physician’s arguments. He appears to have met with some account of the case

The above detail must, I believe, convince every professional reader that the case was one of low Intermittent or Remittent Fever with Convulsions, the character of which was more or less epileptiform. I must confess that I long considered that these convulsive fits were the eclampsia, as it is now generally called, which, not unfrequently, attends disease of the kidneys—the commonest effect of intemperate habits—resulting in poisoning of the blood by urea. This may, possibly, have been the case—the King's mode of living had rendered him liable to such disease, and the condition of the kidneys—*sanguine suffarcinati*—justified the suspicion. The presence of a gouty state of the system,—and the recent suppression of discharge from an issue, impetiginous eruption, or ulcer on the leg—would, materially, add to the gravity of such disease.

I, however, believe that this is not the true explanation. On happening, some time since, to mention the particulars of the case to my friend and colleague Dr. Arthur Payne, he, at once, struck out what, I have no doubt, is the real solution.

I, in common with most of my professional brethren in this country, had seen only too many cases of malarious fever with convulsions,—in children,—in India. Six of these cases, in children between three and eight years of age, have come within my own notice. Three proved rapidly fatal; one of these latter was my own first born, a healthy child in her fourth year. The leading characteristic of this terrible disease is, that an attack of convulsions occurs, as the first sign of the paroxysm, in the place of the cold stage,—the hot stage

by Sir Charles Scarborough—whether this was the official report cited above, appears uncertain.

He says that, upon examining the head, “a copious effusion of lymph” [serum?] “was found in the ventricles and at the base of the cranium;” from which he was disposed to think that the King might have been still further bled with advantage. He added that the result of his experience had convinced him that, if large depletion be not adopted in the first instance, every thing else, attempted afterwards, will be unavailing. The opinion of the profession, upon the treatment most appropriate in apoplexy, has undergone a great change since Sir Henry Hallford wrote this. He concluded that it was quite evident that the King died of apoplexy; and,—“consequently, that his indifference to the solicitations of those about him on religious matters, can only, with charity, be attributed to the effects of disease.” Upon this, Lord Macaulay justly remarks.—“It is much to be regretted that Sir Henry Hallford should have taken so little trouble to ascertain the facts on which he pronounced judgment. He does not seem to have been aware of the narratives of James, Barillon and Huddleston.”

follows—I recollect to have been told by Dr. Jackson, late of this city, that he had met with this disease, occasionally, in adults—especially in an apparently healthy young man, in whom it proved fatal in three or four days. It is clear that certain of the cases of Fever with Epilepsy, described by Dr. Geddes in his *Clinical Illustrations of the Diseases of India*, page 259, under the head of *Cerebral Disease producing Epilepsy*, were of this description. I have had under my care two patients, men between the ages of 50 and 60, both of very intemperate habits, who suffered occasionally, for years before they died from other causes, from violent convulsive fits which came and went as epileptic fits do, and were altogether distinct and different from attacks of *delirium cum tremore*, but I have never chanced to see Malarious Eclampsia in the adult. Dr. Payne has met with a good deal of this disease, in grown up persons,—and has devoted much thought and research to this, hitherto, almost uninvestigated phase of Tropical disease;*—and I am happy that he has given, in the present number of the *Indian Annals of Medical Science*, a very important paper upon the subject.

I feel satisfied that the disease from which King Charles the Second died was Intermittent Fever with Convulsions assuming a periodic character.

Few medical men, of Indian experience, will hesitate to decide that the treatment was barbarously severe and extravagantly and destructively heroic—the case was not one in which bleeding could be beneficial—indeed the repeated bleedings were, in all probability, the real cause of death. A few doses of the Cinchona Bark,—administered early, in that

* It is, of course, only in countries where the malarious poison exists in its most concentrated form that we can expect frequently to meet with those types of disease which are the extreme developments of its toxic operation. It is considered by many that the Insolation of the East is the effect of malarious poisoning, many of its characteristics being almost inseparable from those of Remittent Fever. Every parent is aware that, in India, dentition is much more frequently attended with convulsions than at Home. This is also the case in many parts of Italy, where the greatest offence that can be offered to a mother is to praise her infant's looks—flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes being regarded as tokens that the nursling is threatened with convulsions. Writing in 1773, on the *Diseases of Different Nations*, Dr. Cook noticed that “the Tuscans, near the river Arno, are sorely grieved with the Epilepsy” the Registrar General has, lately, shown, in a comparison of the mortality rates of London, (which, in old times, was very malarious) in 1660-79, and in 1859, that, to 100,000 living, the proportion of deaths, from “Convulsions and Teething” was 1175, then, to 136 now.

judicious manner, in which some had, even then, learnt to employ it,*—might, under Providence, have served to prolong the life of King Charles beyond that of his brother James—and, thus, have prevented the Revolution.

We have now to review, as briefly as possible, the question of empoisonment.

I believe that I may state, without hesitation, that, in the above detail of the symptoms and progress of this remarkable case, there is not any single point or any train of circumstances which, taken together, would lead any medical man, of the present day, to pause in the perusal, and to exclaim—“Here lies suspicion of poisoning.” The only writer who has attempted to analyse the symptoms of the King’s disease, upon the supposition that he died from the effects of poison, is Dr. Welwood, who, as we have already seen, does little more than insist upon the character of the pain in the region of the stomach. Every one, accustomed to treat severe malarious fevers in the Tropics, is acquainted with the great epigastric distress which attends them. A pain in this situation, continuing for five days and a half, apparently with some remissions, unattended with vomiting or purging, but not interfering with or being affected by the action of repeated emetic and cathartic doses, is no symptom of poisoning. It, undoubtedly, resulted, here, from that extreme distension of the portal veins so common in periodic fevers when they are attended with that severe congestion of the liver and spleen, the traces of which the post mortem examination revealed in the body of King Charles. Welwood admits that “It is agreed, on all hands, that King Charles expressed no

* In his Pharmacopœia Bateana, published towards the end of the seventeenth century, Dr. Salmon—not a very high authority—gives the following judicious directions for the use of the Cinchona Bark.—“Before the giving of this powder, it is necessary that the body be prepared by Universals, that the morbifick matter, lying in the first passages, may be evacuated. For which purpose the Emetick Tarter of Mynsicht is to be exhibited once or twice (if the strength of the sick will bear it) to grs iv, v, or vi, and, after that, a proper Infusion of Sena, to cleanse the bowels. This done, you may exhibit the powder according to the direction in the recipe”—(in half drachm doses compounded with Gentian, Serpentry, Contrayerva, Zeodary, Seeds of Citrons, and Occidental Bezoar, every fourth hour, between the fits, in a glass of wine)—“and you will find it certain in its effects as any medicine can be in the world. I never, to my knowledge, gave it in an Ague where it mist the cure, or did not perform according to expectation, But you must note that *it is absolutely necessary to evacuate and cleanse before hand.*”

suspicion of his being poisoned, during all the time of his sickness"—but adds—"Though it must be also observed that the fits were so violent that he could not speak while they were upon him, and shewed an aversion to speaking during the intervals" [we have seen that the King spoke readily enough, in his illness, whenever he thought proper to do so]. "And there was not anything to be seen, upon opening his body, that could reasonably be attributed to the force of poison. Yet, to allow these considerations no more weight than they can well bear, this must be acknowledged, that there are poisons which affect, originally, the animal spirits, and are of so subtle a nature that they leave no concluding marks upon the bodies of those they kill."

Still the suspicion that he had been poisoned was entertained by several persons at the time of the King's death, and, subsequently, became formidable, as the weapon of an incensed political party. Burnet and Patrick and Welwood urged it strongly. Evelyn broadly hinted at it. Sheffield and Cæsar maintained it, the Duchess of Portsmouth positively declared it, the Monmouth faction eagerly adopted and promulgated it; and, what is even still more remarkable, the physicians in attendance could not divest themselves of it,—So also several modern historical writers, Macaulay, Cunningham and Jesse, leave the question open, and none of their readers can ever have closed their works fully satisfied that King Charles's death resulted from natural causes.*

Hume, Macpherson, Mackintosh, Howitt and the authors of the Pictorial History of England repudiate the suspicion of poisoning, without discussing it, and, therefore, without doing more than giving the authority of their opinions against it.

The evidence, on this point, is somewhat complex; but it will not, I think, be difficult to unravel it satisfactorily.

King Charles may be said to have lived and died in an atmosphere of plots. Plots and rumours of plots were the order of the day. Towards this end of his reign, the concoction of plots was, certainly, the occupation of not a few, the detection of plots was the trade of many. No public character was safe from assassination; none were so elevated in position and so blameless in character as to be secure against

* It is very remarkable that Dr. Lingard never alludes to this most important question,—neither does Walter.

accusation. Many of the noblest heads in England,—Russell, Sydney, Stafford, Essex, Plunket,—had been swept down by this political pestilence; the King's murder by poison had frequently been foretold;* Sir George Wakeman, the Queen's physician, was brought to trial, and to ruin, upon the charge of undertaking to poison him for a reward of fifteen thousand pounds.—A person, whom Mr. Montague could name if he would, had prepared, for the King, poisons, liquid and in powder, which he had tried upon dogs. The various designs for his assassination were the subjects of common scandal, while he yet lived. He was to have been shot with a silver bullet. He was to be stabbed with a ten-shilling dagger. He was to be “overthrown with rams' horns, broken pitchers, and a stone in a sling.” A page who had gone to sleep, covered with the King's cloak, was poignarded through the heart. A Romish priest was seized having in his pocket materials for a scandalous life of the King,—to be published after his Majesty's assassination. Early in 1681,—when Charles was in conflict with his parliament and had dissolved them, and had called another to meet at Oxford at the end of two months,—the popular leaders became alarmed and disconcerted. Ralph and Lingard tell us that many pamphlets, in condemnation of this measure, issued from the press, and

* Jesse notices that fears and suspicions of attempts upon the King's life were generally entertained. Charles having been accustomed to expose himself latterly, by walking in the night-time, attended by only one footman, we find Lord Orrery strongly remonstrating with him on the dangers which he might incur; but, in a poem of the period, there is more curious proof of the fears entertained of the Papists.

“Great Charles, who full of mercy might command,
 In peace and pleasure, this thy native land;
 At last take pity on thy tottering throne,
 Shook by the faults of others, not thine own.
 Let not thy life and crown together end,
 Destroyed by a false brother, and false friend.
 Observe the danger *that appears so near.*
That all your subjects do each minute fear:
 One drop of poison, or a Popish Knife
 Ends all the joys of England with thy life.
 Brothers, 'tis true, by nature should be kind;
 But a too zealous and ambitious mind,
 Bribed with a crown on earth and one above,
 Harbours no friendship, tenderness, or love.
 See in all ages what examples are
 Of monarchs murdered by the impatient heir.
 Hard fate of princes, who will ne'er believe
 Till the stroke's struck which they can ne'er retrieve.”

that even the aid of supernatural apparitions was employed. A figure, supposed to be the mother of Monmouth, appeared to Elizabeth Freeman, of Hatfield, on the 24th of January, and said—"Sweetheart, *the 15th of May is appointed for the Royal blood to be poisoned.*" The next day the same apparition said to her, "Tell King Charles from me, and bid him not remove his parliament, and stand to his council." On the following, "Do your message." This tale she confirmed, on oath, before two Magistrates who sent it to the King. At the same time, it was printed and spread over the kingdom!

It is, therefore, as Lord Macaulay argues, by no means extraordinary that,—when the king was suddenly cut off by a disease to which all the court physicians were unable to give a name,—the popular mind should consent to bring in a verdict of "Poisoned".*

This great historical authority has also alluded to the fact that, in those times, it had become quite a habit of the popular mind to attribute to poison the death of any person of rank, the circumstances of whose last illness were not absolutely beyond question. Undoubtedly, poison was, almost up to this time, the chosen instrument of assassins in England, France and Italy. The fathers of the men of that generation had listened, in Westminster Hall, to the abominable details of Overbury's murder. Only twelve years had passed since La Brinvilliers and La Chaussée had expiated their atrocities at the Grève. We are told† that, from this time until the year 1682, the prisons of France teemed with persons accused of poisoning; and that, singularly enough, other offences decreased in similar proportion. The crime was carried to an enormous extent in Italy; it was, if possible, surpassed in France. In 1679, the *Chambre Ardente*, or *Chambre de Poison*, was instituted in Paris, with a view to check the evil, but was abolished in the same year. So lately as 1680,—the

* According to Lord Macaulay, the wild stories bruited about among the vulgar were that,—“His majesty's tongue had swelled to the size of a neat's tongue. A cake of deleterious powder had been found in his brain. There were blue spots on his breast. There were black spots on his shoulder. Something had been put in his snuff-box. Something had been put into his broth. Something had been put into his favorite dish of eggs and amber-grease. The Duchess of Portsmouth had poisoned him in a cup of chocolate”—[was this actually, a rumour *of the time*?]—“The Queen had poisoned him in a jar of dried pears.”

† Mackay. *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions.*

crimes of Lavoisin and Lavigoreux, who had long made poisoning a trade throughout France, having been detected,—these hags were executed with some fifty of their female accomplices. The deaths of Charles's beautiful sister the Duchess of Orleans, of the Countess of Chesterfield, and of Lady Denham lay under grievous suspicions which have never yet been fully dispelled. False charges of poisoning had, constantly, arisen during the two preceeding reigns. James the First, the Prince Henry, the Marquis of Hamilton, the Princess Elizabeth, Oliver Cromwell—all died under doubts which were not the less strong because they were unjust. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that even those physicians who felt themselves unable to diagnosticate clearly the nature of his disease—(the type of which must, certainly, have been very unusual even then)—retained the suspicion of poison in their minds.

It is to be recollected that, at this time, there were many to whom the King's death promised advantages. Among these, the Roman Catholic party were, of course, foremost; and upon them, consequently, the blame fell. The measure of setting aside the succession had long been agitated; and, now that the most dangerous aspirant, Monmouth, had been sent into banishment, rumours of an intention to recall him and of a design to legitimise Lady Portsmouth's Son, the Duke of Richmond, had become rife. Richmond's utterly unprincipled mother was now, absolutely in the King's favor and at the summit of her evil prosperity. Many authorities have, recently, been cited* in support of the fact that an enormous sum of money was offered to this woman as a bribe to lead her to persuade the King to exclude the Duke of York from the succession. Parliament, we are told, was willing to grant Charles a subsidy of £600,000 if he, previously, signed a bill of exclusion against his brother; and the Whig, or Protestant party, fearful of ill success in working on the financial necessities of Charles, made use of the Duchess as their instrument. Another interest, very dear to the Roman Catholic party, was then immediately at stake; Halifax had, apparently, gained an advantage in his contest with the Duke of York. The former had charged Rochester, the Duke's brother in law, with falsifying the books of the Treasury,—

* Notes and Queries, N. S. vol. X. pp. 78 and 183.

and the King had named the Monday on which he was struck down, for having these books laid before him.*

The suspicion entertained by the medical attendants is somewhat difficult to cope with, but it still appears to admit of rational explanation. The evidences of the existence of this suspicion were gathered by Bishop Burnet whose *animus* need not be insisted upon,—He says.—“There were many very apparent suspicions of his being poisoned: for, though the first access looked like an apoplexy, yet it was plain, in the progress of it, that it was no apoplexy. When his body was opened, the physicians who viewed it were, as it were, led by those who might suspect the truth, to look upon the parts that were certainly sound. But both Lower and Needham, two famous physicians, told me they plainly discerned two or three blue spots on the outside of the stomach. Needham called twice to have it opened: but the Surgeons seemed not to hear him. And, when he moved it the second time, he, as he told me, heard Lower say to one that stood next him, ‘Needham will undo us, calling thus to have the stomach opened, for he may see they will not do it.’ They were diverted to look to somewhere else: and, when they returned to look upon the stomach, it was carried away, so that it was never viewed.” “Short, another physician, who was a Papist, but after a form of his own, did very much suspect foul dealing: † and he had talked more freely of it than any of the Protestants dared do at that time. But he was not long after taken

* Welwood has the following story, “A few days before he was taken ill, King Charles being in company where the present posture of affairs was discoursed of, there escaped him some warm expressions, about the uneasy circumstances he was plunged into and the ill measures had been given him: and how, in a certain particular affair, he was pleased to mention, *He had been abused*; adding in some passion, *that if he lived a month longer, he would find a way to make himself easy for the rest of his life*. This passage was whispered abroad next day, and the rumour of recalling the Duke of Monmouth, and sending away the Duke York, came to take air about the same time. Indeed all things were making ready, to put the latter in execution, and there is reason to believe the King had intimated as much to the Duke himself; for some of his richest furniture was put up, and his chief servants ordered to be in readiness to attend their master, upon an hour’s warning, and yachts were waiting to transport some person of quality, without mentioning who it was, or whither bound.”

† Swift adds, in his notes to Burnet’s History,—“One physician” [was this Millington, ?] “told me this from Short himself.”

suddenly ill, upon a large draught of wormwood wine which he had drunk in the house of a popish patient, that lived near the Tower, who had sent for him, of which he died. And, as he said to Lower, Millington, and some other physicians, he believed that he was poisoned for his having spoken so freely of the King's death."

Now we will undertake to say—(without questioning the veracity of the great but not impartial historian who recorded it)—that no reflective reader will be content to accept the above account, precisely as it is given. The authorities of Lower and Needham are, here, so inextricably woven together, that Lower is made to accuse himself of that gross trick which Needham alleges against him and the other physicians,—a folly which no man, who had so thorough a command of his own judgment as Doctor Lower had, can be fairly supposed to have committed. I have always believed that the story of the concealment of the stomach was, first, related to the Bishop by Needham, and that Burnet must, then, have put to Lower the direct question,—“Did you observe or did Needham point out to you certain spots on the stomach, which was then removed, so that he had no opportunity of examining it further,” to which Lower, as an honest man, could only reply—“Yes”—refraining from all explanation, upon the safe principle,—*percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est.*

Nothing that is known of Dr. Lower's character justifies a belief that he behaved dishonestly in his communications upon this subject with Bishop Burnet. Still, notoriously, he was a political meddler, a very inquisitive man who, as Kennet learnt from Tenison, “could pick out of Eleanor Gwyn all the intrigues of the court of King Charles the Second.” He was an ultra Protestant and Whig, of whom King James was wont to observe, that he “did him more mischief than a troop of horse.”* He was, therefore, one, who, in those times of political struggle and religious animosity, might, fairly, be suspected of a tendency to interpret every doubtful or suspicious circumstance to the disfavor of his opponents.

To understand the above narrative of Burnet's fully, it must

* Peter Cunningham.

be borne in mind that Dr. Walter Needham,* although a very respectable practitioner and able anatomist, was not a royal physician. He did not attend the King in his last illness, and his name was not affixed to the report of the post mortem examination.

He, therefore, must have appeared, at the autopsy, almost as a stranger, if not as an intruder. Every medical man can judge with what feelings the royal physicians and surgeons must have viewed the presence of the interloper on that critical occasion. We may fairly conclude that every one of the physicians and surgeons, who assembled on that day to perform the official duty of examining the King's body, came there with more or less nervous trepidation and misgiving, lest something evil might be brought to light. Already, doubtless, Short had been busy in spreading about indiscreet forebodings, and even the most learned among them must have felt doubtful of his own power of discriminating obscure morbid appearances, and confident of his own incapacity to conduct an enquiry into any occult case of poisoning. It has struck me as not at all impossible that it may have been pre-arranged that the stomach and intestines should be removed entire, to be carefully examined more in private, either by the whole of the officially appointed medical men present, or by certain of their number, perhaps by a few of the seniors, or by the surgeons only. Under either of the two latter suppositions, we can understand why Short and Lower did not see these parts, if such be the fact. Providing,

* In the reign of Charles the Second, there were three Doctors Needham, all of whom gained considerable celebrity. Dr. *Jasper* Needham was a practitioner in great repute, much esteemed by Evelyn. He died in 1679.

Marchmount Needham was chiefly notorious as a venal political writer who, in 1643, published a weekly newspaper, on the side of Parliament, the *Mercurius Britannicus*; who, deserting his party and making his peace at court, then published the *Mercurius Pragmaticus*; and who, again changing sides, brought out the *Mercurius Politicus* for the Independents. Having obtained pardon at the Restoration, he practised physic until his death in 1678.

Walter Needham originally practised at Shrewsbury. He, subsequently, attended the anatomical school conducted at Oxford, by Lower, Willis, and Millington. He became a rather distinguished member of the Royal Society, and Physician to the Charter House. I cannot trace out *Walter's* parentage; but, if he was a son or nephew of *Marchmount* and was at all suspected of inheriting any of his relative's love of mischief, it would fully account for his being unwelcome at the autopsy and for the evident distrust with which his former teacher, Dr. Lower, treated him.

on the other hand, it be found that these two physicians actually did affix their signatures to the official report of the post mortem examination, there cannot be a doubt that they and the whole of their colleagues were honestly satisfied, by inspection of the parts, of the truth of their declaration that—“*there was nothing preternatural in the organs within the abdomen,*” of course including the stomach and bowels, with the exception of the congested states of the spleen, liver, and kidneys which they described. Supposing that the separate examination of the stomach and bowels had not been, previously, decided upon, it is not surprising that,—when they found that Needham, the zealous anatomist, was among them, full of eager curiosity, indiscreetly displayed, the first to discover the dark spots, (which, as they are described to us, carry no evidence of anything suspicious,)—they should have determined to satisfy him no further. The course which they took, interpreted in this manner, was natural; it, however, displayed inordinate and, therefore, suspicious caution and timidity, and the result shows that, like most timid measures, it was injudicious and unsuccessful.

It is possible that, as a precautionary measure, the sixteen medical men in attendance, or certain of their number, were, officially, directed to make a private examination of the intestinal canal. This, however, is improbable. The extraordinary number of physicians and surgeons, engaged in this case, has been noticed, with surprise, by several historians; still this must be taken as an evidence of the absence of any criminality on the part of King James who may fairly have considered that, as cruel suspicions were abroad, the first steps in the indispensable enquiry might safely be confided, exclusively, to these men of large experience and unquestionable integrity. The fact, however, that strangers were allowed to be present at the autopsy goes far to prove that the medical officers were not thus instructed by the Government, but were left at liberty to use their own discretion in conducting the examination. That the medical men performed their duty conscientiously, and that, upon examining the stomach and bowels, they could not discover anything morbid or suspicious cannot, I think, now be doubted; but it is much to be regretted that they did not secure themselves and others by expressly stating, in their report, that they had, carefully and thoroughly, examined the stomach and bowels and had discovered them to be sound.

The grounds upon which Dr. Short founded his suspicions nowhere appear; it is, therefore, impossible to grapple with anything so vague. It is very remarkable that,—while Lord Macaulay casts Short aside as being, although skilful in his profession, “a nervous and fanciful man, whose perceptions were, probably, confused by dread of the odious imputations to which he, as a Roman Catholic, was peculiarly exposed;” and rejoices that, in consequence of the advance of medical and chemical science and in the good sense of the public, no such rumours have arisen in modern times,—he adds, in a note “I have been much perplexed by the strange story about Short’s suspicions,” and,—“Though I attach little weight to the authority of Welwood and Burnet in such a case, I cannot reject the testimony of so well-informed and so unwilling a witness as Sheffield.”

We can only judge of the extent of Sheffield’s information by the hint which he has left us. The unwillingness of his testimony is open to question. Under the date of 29th August 1695, Evelyn mentions that he—“visited the Marquis of Normanby, and had much discourse concerning King Charles being poisoned”—but he appears to have been too discreet to place the substance of that discourse in his diary. Sheffield’s account of Charles the 2nd appears to have been left in manuscript*, and the following is all that he says, therein, upon the question of poison.—“I would not say anything on so bad a subject, if I did not think silence itself would, in such a case, signify too much; and, therefore, as an impartial writer, I am obliged to observe, I am assured the most knowing of his physicians did not only believe him poisoned, but thought himself so too, not long after, for having declared his opinion too boldly.” When we, thus, find that all Sheffield’s suspicions were bound up in Short’s case, which Lord Macaulay dismisses so summarily, it, certainly, appears inconsistent in that high authority to retain doubts—solely upon Sheffield’s hear-say evidence.

Dr. Simon Patrick, Bishop of Ely, has left, in his Autobiography,† a very remarkable version of the report that the King died by poison—which can be best noticed at this stage of our enquiry. He writes.—“On February 6th 1684, King Charles died not without great suspicion of being poisoned. The best account of which that I could ever meet with was from Sir

* Vide Gentleman’s Magazine for 1757, p. 256.

† Page 100.

Thomas Millington, who told me, sometime after, as I sat with him in his study, that upon the King's sickness, he was sent for by order of the council; and attended there three days, and never went to bed in three nights. On the Wednesday morning, there was great hopes he might do well, *and they intended to give him the Jesuits' powder for he had a great intermission*, and talked pleasantly as he used to do, and made his repartees very quick. The Dutchesse of Portsmouth coming, asked him 'how he did?' and he answered, 'very well only his head was a little dozed.' They went to dinner, and when they had dined, one came to Sir Thomas and whispered in his ear that they had given the King something to drink since the Doctors went away. He asked him 'if it was by their prescription,' and he said 'no, but was given him by Sir Thomas Williams.' After which, he altered much, and, in the evening of that day there was no hope for him. When they opened him, Dr. Needham asked 'if they would not open his stomach' (which Dr. Needham, himself, had told me before, saying 'that it looked as black as his hat.') Sir Thomas bade him speak to Dr. Short, who stood by. But Dr. Needham prayed him to do it, being better acquainted with him; which, at last, he did. And his answer was, 'ask Dr. Needham if he would have his throat cut?' He believed Dr. Short had talked something freely about these things, among some companions he had at a club. For he was not long after taken desperately ill himself, being unable to go with Sir Thomas as he had appointed to see a patient at Kensington, whither he prayed Sir Thomas to go and call on him, as he came home, and meet Sir Thomas Weatherly" [Wetherby?] "Dr. Brown and Dr. Hobbs at his house. He did so, and was there a little before them, finding him extremely ill in bed. He asked him when he was first seized with this illness, and how it came upon him. He said he was sent for to the Tower, to visit one there, Sir Thomas thought one of the Lords there, and drank his morning draught. As he came home, he was taken with such a horror or rigor all over, that it made his coach, he thought, shake under him in Cheapside. So he bade his coachman drive home, and not go to another place he intended to visit; and took to his bed, out of which he had never come since. Sir Thomas bade him be of good cheer, they would do all in their power to preserve him. 'No, Sir Thomas,' said

he again, 'my business is done.' He prayed him not to say so. But still he said, 'mark what I tell you!' 'my business is done; you can do nothing for me.' So he continued vomiting all that he took till the third day, as I remember, when he died,"

The Bishop adds, "He," Dr. Short, "was a moderate Papist, being the first man in the College of Physicians that took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, when they were enjoined. Sir Thomas asked him, 'How he came to do it?' To which he answered, 'that he abhorred as much as we that the Pope should have any superiority over Kings, and would fight to keep it out.'"

In this very interesting but most inconclusive narrative, not one word is expressly said about poison by the cautious Court Physician, although he, manifestly, intended to hint broadly that the King was poisoned in the draught given to him by Sir Thomas Williams,—(of whom we hear nothing in any of the other reports of the King's illness,)—and that Dr. Short also insinuated that he, himself, was the victim of poison. Throughout this account, the evidence upon the imputed fact is feeble in the extreme,—so much so that it tends considerably to weaken and to explain away much of that which is most damnatory in the other narratives which we have cited. We, here, learn upon how slender a surmise the court physicians, or some of them, began to whisper that their royal patient was the victim of unfair play. His case showed what they regarded as signs of improvement. (It is shown that this was an "intermission"—a usual character in such fevers, and no valid evidence of improvement unless properly taken advantage of in treatment.) Something to drink, which they had not ordered, was given him in their absence. After this,—in consequence of it, as they assumed,—the patient grew worse, as he naturally would do upon the return of the paroxysm of fever after the intermission or remission. We meet with a precisely parallel instance in the accounts of the death of King James the First. While his physicians were at dinner, certain harmless plasters were applied to the King's side and wrists, which, upon their return, the medical attendants removed, with such strong expressions of resentment at the interference, that a suspicion of poison, at once, got abroad, which was much strengthened when they refused to record their opinion that the applications were innoxious.

The account of what occurred to Dr. Needham, at the autopsy, differs widely from that given by Bishop Burnet, inasmuch as Dr. Lower's name does not appear in it, and as the only obstacle which Needham is here shown to have met with, in his anxiety to see the stomach opened, was the terror of Dr. Short.

In what is said here of Dr. Short's illness, we have the advantage of learning that the symptoms of the violent attack which prostrated him *were not those which characterise the operation of any poison*, but were characteristic of ordinary disease. It is worthy of notice that, in this narrative, no allusion is made to the suspicious circumstance, alleged by Burnet, of Short's being attacked immediately after having taken refreshment *at the house of a Papist*. It is evident that Dr. Short was a "trimmer" in religion; and that, consequently, at a time when sectarian rancour was carried to such extreme lengths, his conscience could not but have told him that he did not deserve well of either of the conflicting parties.

It is worthy of remark that Welwood,— who dedicated his *Memoirs* to King William the 3rd, and who, certainly, made the most of every hint which appeared to carry with it evidence of poisoning in this case,—does not appear to insist very strongly upon the suspicious circumstances of Short's death,—saying that,—“when he came to die himself he expressed *some suspicion* that he had met with the same treatment” [by poison] “for opening his mind too freely on that point.” It is noticeable that, although Burnet tells us that Short, when dying, assured two of the greatest anatomists of the day that he believed himself to be dying of poison, there is no evidence of their having examined his body after death, or of their having given any opinion upon the character of the symptoms of his disease. And, while Welwood puts forward what he considers to have been evidence of poison, so prominently as to appear to range himself with the advocates of this view of the case, it is not by any means certain that he was convinced in this opinion; as, after reviewing the arguments on that side of the question, he introduces the evidences of natural death in the following impartial terms;—“So much for the circumstances of King Charles's death that seem to have an ill aspect. *There are others, that seem to destroy all suspicion of treachery in the matter.*”

We have now to deal with the, at first sight, rather startling assertion, that the King's death was clearly foreseen previous to the occurrence of his fatal illness. In the *Numerus Infustus*,—left, in M.S., by Mr. Charles Cæsar of Great Gransden, a country gentleman and sincere loyalist, who amused himself in collecting the historical gossip of the day, and who died in 1707,—it is said of the King.—“Whether any hand but his own contributed to the accelerating or hastening of his death, I have no warrant to make any assertion: let the future writers of history adjust the matter to the clear information of posterity: all that I have to say is, the news of his death was published before there was any report of his sickness. He died of an apoplexy.”—He, elsewhere, says that the King—“died suddenly of an apoplexy or poison.”*

In 1759, an anonymous writer published the following statement in the *Gentleman's Magazine*:—That, towards the close of Charles's reign, it was—“resolved at last to agree with the Parliament to recal his son, the Duke of Monmouth, and banish the Duke of York once more from his Court. This greatly alarmed the whole Popish faction, and this seems to be the exact time when it was determined to poison the King and usher in their darling bigot, the Duke of York, upon the throne.” Mr. Tessier (a person with whose mother Charles and his brother had lodged in France and who was appointed the King's embroiderer at the Restoration) “by virtue of his post of embroiderer had orders to make some new tapestry, &c. for the palace against such a time, and was strictly enjoined to put the letters J. R., that is *James Rex*, instead of C. R. or *Charles Rex* at which he greatly hesitated, but was peremptorily ordered to follow his instructions: his Majesty was then in perfect health, but precisely at the time Tessier had finished his work, his death was declared, and the Duke proclaimed. It remains a doubt whether the Duke had any concern in this black and horrid transaction, but it seems improbable that any persons should dare to attempt it without his privity, as being as guilty as the rest. It is remarkable how greatly this account is confirmed by Dr. Welwood, whose authority or veracity was never yet questioned; in his *Memoirs*, there are the following

* Edmund Lodge's *Life of Sir Julius Cæsar* &c.—p. p. 103-111.

passages:—"The Romish party, that manag'd about Court, were observed to be more than ordinarily diligent and busy up and down Whitehall, and St. James's, as if some very important affair was in agitation, and a new and unusual concern was to be seen on their countenances"—He afterwards, says, "there was a foreign minister that, some days before the King fell ill, ordered his steward to buy a considerable quantity of black cloth, which served him and his retinue after, for mourning. And the late ambassador Don Pedro Ronquillo, made it no secret that he had a letter from Flanders, the week before Charles died, that took notice of his death, as the news there.—Yet both these might fall out by accident"

"But be this as it may, Tessier, who lived several years after, constantly, to the day of his death, declared his full persuasion that the King was poisoned. There is now living in Spital-Fields a niece of his: who has frequently heard her uncle repeat the above particular. She is a very sober and sedate person, of great probity, and will, upon oath, testify the above declaration of her uncle Tessier."

That Charles's assassination was apprehended by many cannot be questioned, and it is not improbable that, in a reign so fraught with plots as this was, false reports of the King's death should have been frequently bruited about. The coincidence, if it really occurred, is remarkable and nothing more.

It is needless to insist upon the utter absence of probability and of valid evidence in the story of Tessier,—a grossly incredible tale asserted by a nameless person to have been related by an imbecile woman, upon the authority of a dotard.*

This story is not noticed by Lord Macaulay or by any other historian of authority.

Our last point for enquiry is one of great interest.

Burnet says—"Since I have mentioned the suspicions of poison as the cause of his death, I must add that I never heard any lay these suspicions on his brother."†

* Tessier must have been, at least, between seventy and eighty years of age in 1700, and his niece was prepared to testify to the truth of his story *fifty-nine years* afterwards!

† Had Bishop Burnet never seen or heard of the Duke of Monmouth's Declaration, drawn up by Fergusson, in which King James is distinctly charged with poisoning his brother to prevent the discovery and punishment of the murder of the Earl of Essex, and to clear his own way to the throne?

“But his dying so critically, as it were in the minute in which he seemed to begin a turn of affairs, made it to be generally the more believed, and that the Papists had done it either by means of some of Lady Portsmouth’s servants or, as some fancied, by poisoned snuff; for so many of the small veins of the brain had burst that the brain was in great disorder, and no judgment could be made concerning it” [No medical man can read this without a smile] “To this, I shall add a very surprising story, that I heard in November 1709, from Mr. Henly of Hampshire. He told me that, when the Dutchesse of Portsmouth came over to England in the year 1699, he heard that she had talked as if king Charles had been poisoned; which he desiring to have from her own mouth, she gave him this account of it. She was always pressing the king to make both himself and his people easy, and to come to a full agreement with his parliament, and he was come to a final resolution of sending away his brother and of calling a parliament; which was to be executed the next day after he fell into that fit of which he died. She was put upon the secret, and spoke of it to no person alive, but to her confessor: but the confessor, she believed, told it to some, who, seeing what was to follow, took that wicked course to prevent it. Having this from so worthy a person, as I have set it down without adding the least circumstance to it, I thought it too important not to be mentioned in this history.”

Swift remarks, in his notes to Burnet’s History—“I wonder Mr. Henly never told me this story.” The fact that the Dutchesse of Portsmouth did make assertions of this kind is supported by Mr. Fox who notices* that—“The King’s death was by many supposed to have been the effect of poison, but although there is reason to believe that this suspicion was har-

It is strange that Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire, commits himself to a similar assertion, in these words.—“But here I must needs take notice of an unusual piece of justice, which yet all the world has almost unanimously agreed in.—I mean in not suspecting his successor of the least share of so horrid a villany and perhaps there never was a more remarkable instance of the wonderful power of truth and innocency; for ’tis next to a miracle that so unfortunate a Prince, in the midst of all these disadvantages he lies under, should yet be so cleared of this by his greatest enemies, notwithstanding all those circumstances that use to give suspicion, and that extreme malice which has, of late, attended him in all his actions.”

* Introductory chapter to a History of the early part of the Reign of James the Second,—page 67.

boured by persons very near to him and, among others, as I have heard, by the Dutchess of Portsmouth, it appears, upon the whole, to rest upon very slender foundations." Upon this, Lord Holland remarks that Mr. Fox had this report from the family of his mother, great grand daughter to the Dutchess of Portsmouth, whom his mother, when very young, had seen at Aubigny; and adds that many of the Lenox family, with whom Mr. Fox was subsequently acquainted, had, no doubt, frequently conversed with her.

It is evident that Mr. Fox did not attach much weight to the authority of his ancestress.

Further, Dean Cowper told Spence that the Dutchess, when in England in 1699, assured Lord Chancellor Cowper that Charles was actually poisoned at her house, by one of her own footmen, in a cup of chocolate.

On the other hand, the Earl of Dartmouth says, (in his notes to Burnet's History)—of Mr. Henly. This *worthy person* was a professed atheist, a zealous republican, and a most obsequious follower of the Earl of Sunderland in all his notions as well as vices. The character of the lady was well known, who might think it proper to publish something she thought would be agreeable, in order to obtain the ends she came over for, which, at that time, was understood not to be much for the advantage of the nation: therefore was soon despatched [sent away] by the procurement of her old friend the Earl of Sunderland."

The Dutchess, certainly, appears to have been disappointed with her acquaintance Mr. Henly, and to have been unwilling to repeat, publicly in Paris, what she thought proper to assert, twenty five years previously, in England,—as Lord Lansdown* states that it was his fortune to be residing in Paris when Burnet's History was published; [*cir.* 1724] Henly's story attracted his attention. He says,—“Such a particular was too remarkable not to raise my curiosity: the Dutchess was then at Paris: I employed a person who had the honor to be intimate with her grace, to enquire from her own mouth into the truth of his passage: her reply was this, ‘that she recollected no acquaintance with Mr. Henly; but she remembered well Dr. Burnet and his character. That the

* Cited by Mr. Rose in the Appendix to his observations on Mr. Fox's work, p. 1 v. 4.

King and Duke looked upon him as the greatest liar upon the face of the earth, and there was no believing one word that he said."

Mr. Jesse mentions, without stating his authority, that the Dutchess visited England a second time, in 1715, when she was presented to Queen Caroline, then Princess of Wales, and when she is said to have had the effrontery to apply for a pension to George the First.

It is known that,—although this woman, upon the death of Charles, returned to France with considerable property in money and jewels, having had the estate of Aubigny-sur-Nièvre and an annuity settled upon her as a reward for what Louis the Fourteenth termed *les services importants* which she had rendered to France,—she reduced herself to poverty, by extravagance and gaming, to that pass that Lady Sunderland speaks of her, in 1690, as "scandalous and poor." It is, therefore, easy to understand that, in the coarseness of her utterly unprincipled and abandoned nature, she may have considered that she was rendering a service, for which the House of Hanover would be grateful, in affixing the stigma of usurpation by fratricide to her enemy King James. It is worthy of remark that, after her second fruitless visit to England, the Duc de St. Simon tells us that she was—"*fort vieille, très convertie, et pénitente et très mal dans ses affaires,*"—and oppressed with the heavy calamity of being reduced "*à vivre dans sa campagne.*" Eventually, (her chances in England having, we suppose, become hopeless)—the Regent increased her pension from twelve to twenty thousand livres.

Thus, we consider, falls to the ground the last link of that weak but complicated chain of evidence upon which the suspicion that Charles the Second died by poison has depended. †

† Some stress has been laid by Mr. Peter Cunningham upon the fact that Lord Chesterfield mentions, in his Letters to his Son (Letter 93,)—that Charles was poisoned. It is true that, as Mr. Cunningham remarks, Chesterfield lived among many who were likely to be well informed, and was the grandson of the Earl of Chesterfield who was with Charles at his death; still the assertion, in the letter, is a very cursory one.—"He lived uneasily with his people and his parliament, and was, at last, poisoned." We know well that the grandfather (whom Swift called "the greatest Knave in England") was no friend to James the Second; and, as he says nothing, in his narrative of the King's death, about the suspicion of poison, (a tender point with his lordship, as he had suffered much under the suspicion of having poisoned his second wife, the Lady Elizabeth Butler.) the grandson's passing statement of a report current among those unfriendly to the Stuarts does not appear to deserve any weight as evidence.

I cannot refrain from subjoining, from a broadside now before me, evidence that the Duchess of Portsmouth's ingenuity need not have been severely taxed in concocting the story that King Charles was poisoned by her servants. This document gains an extraordinary interest from the circumstance of *its having, evidently, been published during Charles's life time.** The tale had been concocted previous to the King's death, and she had only to turn upon her enemies the weapon which, thirty years before, their partizans had forged, to wound herself. The pasquinade is headed, ARTICLES of HIGH TREASON and other HIGH CRIMES and MISDEMEANORS against the DUTCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

The Seventeenth Charge is.—“That she hath and doth relieve and countenance in her family and lodgings in Whitehal several servants, whom she knows to be Papists and ill-affected to the Protestant Religion and Government, giving them frequent and private access to His Majesty to the hazard and danger of His Majesty's Person, and in a contempt of a late act of Parliament, whereby all Papists whatsoever (except Father Huddleston, seven women servants and some foreign servants to Her Majesty) were prohibited to come within the limits of His Majesty's Palace or Court; notwithstanding which act of Parliament, she hath and still doth not only receive in her lodgings, as aforesaid, several servants of the popish persuasion, but she hath lately taken into her service a French Papist, whom she formerly preferred to His Majesty, as a confectioner, and who was entred to His Majesty's service upon the aforesaid act, which said confectioner doth dayly prepare sweetmeats and other Banquetings (in triumph over the late fresh act of Parliament) for His Majesty at her lodgings, so as His Majesty may be in an eminent danger from the aforesaid French Papist, who has such opportunity to poison His Sacred Majesty (by mixing poyson in the sweetmeats), whom God long preserve.

* Some other clauses of this pasquinade have been quoted by Mr. Jesse, who says that it was printed in 1680. My copy appears to be quite complete, but it does not bear any date.

† This must refer to the King's sudden illness in August 1679. For several interesting allusions to this illness, *vide* Henry Sidney's Diary of the Times of Charles the Second. On the 29th August, Mr. Mountstevens writes. “Tuesday night the king was taken ill with a fit, but much more moderately than upon Friday and Saturday night; since that, he has had not the least appearance of one; so that the physicians are of opinion he will have no more of it. It is believed his majesty will return to Whitehall as soon as he shall be in a condition to remove thither with safety which it is hoped he may do the beginning of next week.” On the same day, Sir William Temple writes that the king passed a very ill day on Tuesday, but that as he had missed his fits for two days running, all the physicians were confident that the worst was over, Sir William says, that “Upon the king's first illness, the Lords Essex and Halifax being about him thought his danger great, and their own so too, and that, if any thing happened to the king's life, the Duke of Monmouth would be at the head of the nation, in opposition to the Duke upon pretence of Popery, and in conjunction with Lord Shaftesbury, who had threatened to have their heads upon the prorogation of the last parliament, had proposed to the king the sending immediately for the Duke” September 11th, Mr. Savile writes from Paris—“The news of

XVIII. That the day before His Majesty fell sick at Windsor† she persuaded His Majesty (being then in her Lodgings) to eat a mess of Broath, prepared by some of her Papist servants, whereupon His Majesty fell immediately sick, it being the Opinion of some Able Physicians, that His Majesty's diseases were much augmented if not wholly created by the aforesaid Broath.

XIX. That during his Majesty's sickness, she introduced several unknown persons by a Back Door to his Majesty's Bed-chamber, who in all likelihood were *Romish* Preists, *French* Physicians, Agents, or Ministers of the *French* King's, all which persons could have no honest or lawful business with His Majesty, at that time especially, being privately introduced, and His Majesty's proper servants, belonging to his Bed chamber being all sent out except such as were Popishly affected, her creatures consequently, and her footmen ordered to wait in the anti-chamber, as is judged to prevent any body's hearing, or seeing them, as if they had been of His Majesties Bed-chamber.

XX. That she has by her creatures and friends given out and whispered abroad that she was married to His Majesty and that her son the Duke of Richmond is his Majesties Legitimate Son, and consequently, Prince of Wales, his health being frequently drunk by her and her creatures in her night debauches and merry meetings, to the great dishonour and reflection of His Majesty and the manifest peril and danger of the kingdoms, who may hereafter by such false and scandalous storys and wicked practises be embroyled in distractions if not in Bloud and Civil Wars, to the utter ruine of His Majesties subjects, and subversion of the Protestant Religion, it being manifest, she being a *Papist* herself, will breed her Son in the same Religion however she may pretend to the contrary.

our master's illness has so frightened me that I expect this day's letters with great impatience, as well as with fear and trembling, Good God! what a change would such an accident make! the very thought of it frights me out of my wits. God bless you, and deliver us all from that damnable curse"—September 2nd, the Dowager Lady Sunderland writes, "I writ to you as soon as my little brains were settled by hearing the king was much mended, and thanks be to God, does yet continue; but I have the less comfort in it because his fits were put off, like mine, by the Jesuits' powder, and it was as necessary to give it to him as to me, for he was with two fits weaker than I was with more. If all the trouble people have been in was out of kindness to him, never had king so much, for it was to a distraction. *I believe there is scarce anybody beyond Temple Bar that believes his distemper proceeded from any thing but poison, though as little like it as if he had fallen from a horse.*"

He did not recover rapidly. Late in January, 1680 the Countess of Sunderland writes. "The king, God be praised, is better than ever I have seen him since his sickness;" and, in April, Sir W. Temple says. "The king looks in better health than I have known him since his sickness last year."

In May of that year, there was a recurrence of the ague-fits. On the 18th of that month, Lady Sunderland wrote. "We have been all sadly alarmed with the King's being sick, but he is now very well again, and I hope he will continue so, if he can be kept from fishing when a dog could not be abroad." Again,—"I was then, like most others, out of my wits with the King's being ill, and greater distraction never was any where for the time; thanks be to God, it did not last long. I have not heard to day, but yesterday he was very well, but I take the less comfort in it because he has taken the Jesuits' powder" [there was, at that time, according to Sir W. Temple, a suspicion that the Bark left no cures without danger of worse returns] "the fits he had did not last above two or three hours. In this time there was several parties met to counsel in their fright. God keep the nation from the experiment that they would have done."

XXI. That she having that high and dishonourable absolute dominion and power over the King's Heart, she has opportunity to draw from him the secrets of his Government, opportunity by herself, or other Engines of hers, to poison, or otherwise, to destroy the King: opportunity, at least to promote a *French* Popish interest; so that it is not only impossible the Protestant Religion should live; but it's not possible, the King can have a due sense of the danger, he was, or may be in from the *Romish* Conspiracy, which has, is, or may be against His Royal Person or Government.

We find the subjoined very remarkable and significant passage in Henry Sidney's diary, under the date of March 9th, 1679.—“*He*” [The Duke of Monmouth] “*resolves to take up arms in case the King dies, for he will conclude him murdered.*”

CORRIGENDA.

Page 7 Line 3 from foot, *for* Burnett *read* Burnet.

The note in page 8 and the first note in page 9 are transposed.

Page 31 Line 13 *for* pronounced him Epileptic, *read* pronounced him Apoplectic.

„ 34 Line 7 *for* Chephalic, *read* Cephalic.

„ 36 Line 5 from foot, *for* this end of his reign, *read* the end of his reign.

The second note in page 53 belongs to page 54.

